

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

**“Acting out the Myths: The Power of Narrative Discourse in Shaping the Zimbabwe
Conflict of Matabeleland, 1980-1987”**

**By
Carl Swarr Stauffer
206526881**

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**School of Economic Science and Management
Faculty of Management Studies**

Supervisor: Dr. Geoff Harris

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Supervisors permission to submit for examination

Student Name: Carl Stauffer

Student no.: 206526881

Dissertation Title: Acting out the myths: the power of narrative discourse in shaping the Zimbabwe conflict of Matabeleland, 1980-1987

As the candidate's supervisor I agree to the submission of this dissertation for examination.

The above candidate has satisfied the requirements of English language competency.

Name of Supervisor: Professor G T Harris

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Geoff Harris', followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

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THESIS ABSTRACT

Thesis Title:

Acting out the Myths: The Power of Narrative Discourse in Shaping the Zimbabwe Conflict of Matabeleland – 1980-1987

This thesis interrogates the Matabeleland disturbances of 1980-1987 by analysing the conflict narratives promulgated by the ZANU-PF and how these narratives directly impacted the socio-political construction of violence that was enacted during that period. Of critical relevance is the interplay between the revolutionary narratives manufactured and imposed by the ZANU-PF regime and the myriad of contrasting, yet subjugated counter-narratives that were formulated as alternative resistances by the recipient communities. Through in-depth interview and document analysis methodologies, this research deconstructs the generative nature of scripted violence through the exploration of five salient themes employed by the ZANU-PF to produce its political meta-narrative: Ethnicity, Nationalism, Loyalty, Legitimacy and Unity. This study explores the power and function of narrative discourse in the formulation of ethnic identities, nation-state ordering, historical exclusion, political discipline, and social uniformity. The premise of this dissertation suggests that durable peace in Zimbabwe will only be realised to the degree that the silenced victims of the Matabeleland massacres are afforded a public voice and a sustained recognition in the historic, collective memory of that nation.

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Chapter 1: Introduction – Recovering the Silenced Scripts

“You can talk to your sons, we speak to graves.”¹

1.1. Silence does not mean Consent

This thesis is concerned with *recovering the silenced scripts* of the violence that occurred in Matabeleland, Zimbabwe in the early 1980s with the aim of exploring how these hidden texts may assist in building peace in the future. Few sources in this research sample could deny that the victims of violence in Matabeleland were not silenced. While the direct violence of Matabeleland was perpetrated between 1980 and 1987, most of the survivors of that violence interviewed in this study did not start to freely talk about their painful experiences of traumatic violence until 1991-92 at the earliest and 2005-06 at the latest. Interview respondent NM1, who survived a harrowing experience of a direct threat of violence and death at the hands of a Fifth Brigade Unit in 1982, speaks of her own silencing as follows:

“I wouldn’t speak. Maybe I started talking about this freely say maybe 2001, really. Because, I was afraid; if I told that story, I might have been a victim again of some violence or ... I wasn’t sure on whose ears it would fall and what the consequences would be. Like after that nasty experience which I have related, my husband and the pastor drove through Esigodini, and [met] the army commander who was harassing us, and he said to them ‘You people, if you have a god that you are worshipping, stick to him. Because I had been given a command to come and wipe you out. Not even to talk but to just set that fire ablaze in whatever way. But when I got there, I found someone...that one was looking at me, I didn’t see human eyes looking at me. I was just frozen with fear; I couldn’t even command ‘shoot!’ I should have done that but I never did.’ And he said ‘I was punished for that’. But then he said ‘what stories are you telling about that?’ It was maybe some months from [the incident]... He wanted to know ‘what stories is that woman [respondent] telling around about what happened?’ And my husband said ‘what stories are you expecting?’ He said ‘no, I want to know what she’s saying and to whom she’s saying it because you go around telling stories, you get into trouble.’ So when my husband came home he told me of the guard and I said ‘I’m not telling the story to anybody. And I never did. Until I started on issues of peace and justice and then I’ve been telling this story to this day.’”²

¹ A quote by Sylvia Dhlomo, founder of a support group for victims of political violence called Khulumani (translated as ‘speak-out’ in IsiZulu) located in South Africa. Sylvia lost her teenage son to the political violence under the South African Apartheid regime.

² Interview: NM1, Mtshabezi, Zimbabwe – 28/06/06 – (Female Ndebele Peace Activist working with rural Matabeleland women).

The reasons for this pervading sense of silence are one of the key interrogations of this thesis, however, there were six primary sources of silencing that emerged from the interview transcriptions and the document analysis conducted in this research that deserve to be highlighted at the start. Firstly, the severity of violence enacted by the Fifth Brigade during the Gukurahundi period engulfed the Matabeleland citizenry in an ocean of paralysing *fear*:

“Zimbabwe is a very different country because, although we call ourselves ‘free’...we are not free. And people in Zimbabwe today, I don’t know how we can say we are free; because you can not speak your mind. You can not speak freely about your feelings, how you feel because you’ll be perceived as somebody who is a ... it’s not that you can be perceived as somebody who is a ‘dissident’; you are perceived as somebody who is ‘opposing’...*people should be able to express themselves and say what they feel freely without any fear, but in Zimbabwe we are living in fear, you cannot say anything freely, because you can be killed, you can be really beaten up.*”³

Secondly, the protracted nature of violence in Matabeleland has entrenched individuals and communities in patterns of unresolved *trauma* that function as barriers for people to speak openly about their pain:

“No. Even the people [we] are interviewing...do you know that they are even scared to tell us the story of how it happened, they still feel ZANU-PF [is] around, ...And since I started [speaking out].. I’m the founder of this organization, that’s when I felt to talk about it, and it has helped me, to talk about it. *Because I remember my relatives at home, how they were grieving for the ones who died and when people came back from those camps in Matopos, then my Aunt’s son didn’t come back, ah!, that was a blow. No, nobody talks [about] it. I am the only one who talks about it now. You can’t talk. And even if ... some of them who are in South Africa, they don’t want to talk about it.*”⁴

Thirdly, the extended network of ZANU-PF intelligence *surveillance* has resulted in a great deal of paranoia regarding who may be listening to those who do want to speak out:

“Carefully [speak], yes. But even there, you’ll never know. As soon as you are through, you would find that what you’d have said out there will be broadcasted here at home. You remind me of some Zimbabweans I found in Atlanta, Georgia [USA] a month ago. They felt they recognized that there were some Zimbabwean

³Interview: CM2, Kitwe, Zambia – 09/05/07 - (Ndebele teacher and community development worker with Orphans and Vulnerable Children, former Political Activist and Youth Leader for ZAPU in the early 1980s).

⁴Interview: JD1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 15/09/06 – (Female Ndebele NGO activist advocating for women and refugees rights).

agents who kept following them up. Until they reported them to the State and those guys were deported. *So even Zimbabweans who are outside the country are not as free as they should be, they still carry the fear 'who else is listening as I speak'?*"⁵

Fourthly, a number of respondents indicated that they are silent because there is no public 'space', an avenue or a forum in which to tell their story:

*"For the people in Matabeleland there was no public space. Like I was saying to you, Carl, that for the people of Matabeleland before the 'unity', it was like the war was still on, and they were not free; they could not say anything freely. They could not really say that 'okay, something bad has happened to us'; nobody was there to listen to them, and they couldn't say anything. And if ever you were to say that even to somebody outside, the ZANU-PF government would say you are lying. And so people were not free, they could not say anything really and be listened to by anybody."*⁶

Fifthly, there were those interviewees who tagged the issue of *proximity* (far enough away in distance from Zimbabwe) as a necessary precursor to break their silence and begin to speak or write their stories publicly:

*"No, I kept the story quiet, not because I wanted to be quiet, but because maybe there was no avenue to express that story. In fact, the story that you read about my father was...I wrote it while I was doing a course on Grief and Suffering, at Ashland [in USA]. That's when I wrote that story, for the first time [1991-92]. So I kind-of said 'I think I want to write this story'. I've always kept it in my heart, so after having written it, I then said, I want it published; that's when it was published [2003]. From thereon I take it, it's now public knowledge."*⁷

Lastly, places that are meant to be havens of debate and dialogical discourse such as among the youth sector and on the university campuses became locations of *threat and intimidation* and therefore, also functioned to silence the voices of Matabeleland:

"That was '91, my second year. I remember we actually went to lecture theatre at about 7 [pm], and the people wanted to talk about the issue of Matabeleland. It was the Ndebele-speaking students, they thought 'this is our thing', and we were supposed to go there to air the views of [our] experience ... And when the two speakers actually went on the stage, Welshman Ncube was the first, then when

⁵Interview: AN1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 12/09/07 – (Ndebele Church leader and Peace activist).

⁶Interview: CM2, Kitwe, Zambia – 09/05/07 - (Ndebele teacher and community development worker with Orphans and Vulnerable Children, former Political Activist and Youth Leader for ZAPU in the early 1980s).

⁷Interview: DN1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 29/03/07 – (Ndebele Church Leader whose father was killed by 5th Brigade soldiers in 1984).

some students went on the stage to express that ... then there were Shona-speaking students who went on the stage. And one of the things which sparked violence that day was that these other students from Mashonaland said ‘you know but, you can’t actually claim this victory [be]cause the ZIPRA combatants actually killed a lot of Shona people in Entumbane and so you are not the only victims’. And everything just flared up and the whole seminar just broke up then some people were running away. *So the emotions were still too high and the people feared to talk about it. But every time you talk about it, it raises personal emotions.* I remember when one raised the argument that they *were* dissidents and that the government was *right* in taking that action, this other guy responded personally by saying ‘You mean my father was a *dissident*?’ So you can start to take things personally and then not prove things anyway.”⁸

Hence, while it remains clear that the comprehensive silencing of Matabeleland victims of violence had many points of origins, and these represent rather straight forward observations, this thesis concerns itself with the *significance* of this silencing effect. For the ZANU-PF, this silencing served the purpose of confirming their chosen mantra of ‘*silence means consent*’ as a standard measure for ‘effective’ rule over the ‘contented’ masses. However, they were mistaken. For the many Matabeleland victims and survivors who could not, or dared not speak out, there were deep and catastrophic consequences to the suppression of their narratives. Surfacing a portion of these pivotal, subjugated narratives and exposing the ramifications of their meaning in the processes of social construction is central to this study.

1.2. The Narrative Location of this Study

*“ZANU- PF used the language as a vehicle, not only to transport the message they wanted people to get, but the language was also used in order to hide who they really were...the Shona language became an instrument of violence and destruction. It’s then carried a message that traumatised people. Because the language in itself reminds, carries people back to the incidents of what happened.”*⁹

The intrigue of *narrative* as a critical component to this thesis on violent conflict and its counterpart of peace need explanation upfront. Classical conflict resolution theory

⁸Interview: SG1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 20/12/07 - (Ndebele professor of Political Science, researcher and author).

⁹ Interview: RM2, Johannesburg, South Africa - 26/02/08 – (Shona NGO peace activist advocating for trauma healing and reconciliation among rural Matabeleland communities and survivors of Gukurahundi violence).

(both at the interpersonal and at the collective level) has leaned toward a highly linear teleology of conflict analysis through the lenses of rationalistic, interest-based bargaining and / or materialistic, unequal distribution of scarce resources as the diagnosis for violence. These approaches while useful in many conflictual situations tend to sideline or suppress the powerful impulses that flow out of a cyclical, illogical, and often ethereal reality. These traditional theories of conflict escalation err on the side of ‘essentialist-reductionist’ trappings and have failed to give explanation to the continuous convulsive outbursts of horrific, often seemingly unexplainable violence experienced at all levels of human societal configurations. *The goal of this study is to unearth other explanations which may run parallel and complimentary to the dominant frames of social conflict analysis, but that will not only satisfy the intellect, but will also connect to the soul. It is at this juncture (between intellect and intuition) that the narrative approach becomes particularly relevant and useful.*

This intangible and often elusive narrative reality is what one might call the ‘story behind the story’ as in the words of Alice of Wonderland, “*Where things are not what they seem.*” This mysterious space is often the world of the hidden, the unspoken, the emotive, the psycho-social domain of myth and symbol. Many times this insubstantial yet driving force finds its expression in ceremonial ritual, the creative arts and in story discourse. Proponents of the narrative reality, readily subsume *all* of life experience as it is known under the totality of the story process and its formative power to create all that exists. This would include the realm of conflict and its multifaceted expressions.

This study aims to surface the narrative approach as the essential scaffolding utilised for the social construction of violence as well as peace. The danger of this thesis is that the destructive power of violent conflict will somehow be perceived to be excused and wiped away by a set of words. It may appear that through the articulation of certain philosophical or literary notions and theories, that the concrete pain of the physical reality of war can be explained as subjective, a figment of the imagination. The fear being that the tangible social consequences of the injustice of severe violence would systematically be ‘narrativized’ away into oblivion. Being fully aware of these concerns, this thesis not only attempts to identify and explain the narrative discourses that underpin violent conflicts and peace-building endeavours, but will also expose the means by which these

processes (of violence and peace) are socially constructed realities. As such, if these processes can be socially constructed, they can be deconstructed. It is in this action of deconstruction that this study intends to contribute to the ‘real-time’ practice of conflict transformation in Africa and beyond.

In sum, this study does not endorse narrative as a ‘totalising’ explanation of reality; that there is no form of reality outside the creative act of narrative discourse. Instead, it sees narrative as playing a pivotal role in shaping the descriptive language of conflict that we as humans live by; that which gives direction to our beliefs and behaviours. In the process of acting out these guiding social narratives we create reality. When this created reality results in violent conflict, we as human change agents have the responsibility to deconstruct these narratives and reconstruct them by telling and acting out another story; a positive, desirable story that builds a durable peace for future generations.

1.3. Research Motivation

“When a dialogue becomes a monologue, oppression ensues.”¹⁰

The Matabeleland violence of 1980-1987, (the primary focus of this thesis) has been gazed upon with many eyes and described by many voices. By and large this specific conflict crisis has been perceived as emanating from competitive military strategies, political power dynamics, and/or historic inter-ethnic clashes. The first published mentions of the Matabeleland conflict began to emerge in the late 1980s and the early 1990s.¹¹ While substantially limited in scope, much of this body of literature propagates that the violence unleashed in the Matabeleland conflict was even more traumatic than that experienced in the Liberation struggle.¹² The element of ethnic identity manipulation *combined* with the power of state violence in the Matabeleland

¹⁰ Boal, A. 1979. *Theater of the Oppressed*. London: Pluto Press.

¹¹ Mandaza, I. 1987. *Zimbabwe: The Political Economy of Transition 1980-1986*. CODESRIA Book Series. Harare: Jongwe Press; Stoneman, C. (ed.) 1988. *Zimbabwe's Prospects*. London: Macmillan Publishers; Herbst, J. 1990. *State Politics in Zimbabwe*. Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publications; Mungazi, D. 1992. *Colonial Policy and Conflict in Zimbabwe*. London: Taylor and Francis Ltd; Sachikonye, L. (ed.) 1995. *Democracy, Civil Society and the State: Social Movements in Southern Africa*. Harare: SAPES Books.

¹² Werbner, R. 1991. *Tears of the Dead: The Social Biography of an African Family*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press; Berkeley, B. 1986. *Zimbabwe: Wages of War – A Report on Human Rights*. New York: Lawyers Committee for Human Rights; Weitzer, R. 1984. “In Search of Regime Security: Zimbabwe”. *Journal for Modern African Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 4: December, 529-557.

conflict is often omitted altogether or dealt with in a highly cursory manner within the current literature.¹³ Katri Pohjolainen Yap has done the most to fill this gap in her excellent doctoral dissertation on power, ethnicity and violence in the Matabeleland conflict. In her synopsis of the problem she states that: “*The issue of conflict [in Matabeleland] is often presented mainly as a ‘rift’ between two parties and the years of political and military terror are downplayed*”.¹⁴

The Matabeleland conflict was more than a ‘war of words’; it was a clash of narratives. Narrative discourses embedded in recent events, lived experience and remembered histories.¹⁵ Narratives are birthed out of world-views¹⁶ propelled by deep currents of identity-formation¹⁷, recognition inter-subjectivities¹⁸ and collective ‘chosen traumas and glories’.¹⁹ These primal-stories of life, survival and co-existence are not merely spoken about but they are acted upon. The power of organised violence is never created or wielded in a vacuum. Structural power is rooted and grows out of ‘*texts produced within contexts*’²⁰. Oppressive power (systematic repression) is the climactic expression of a tightly knit meta-narrative that has been born from and nurtured within a particular locale of violence.

For the purposes of this study, the Matabeleland conflict is understood to represent a culminating centre stage on which this clash of narratives was (and still is) enacted. Amidst the clamouring chaos of competing social discourses, a primary and hegemonic story usually seems to emerge bringing with it an organising frame and

¹³ Banana, C. (ed.) 1989. *Turmoil and Tenacity: Zimbabwe 1890-1990*. Harare: The College Press.

¹⁴ Yap, K. 2001. *Uprooting the Weeds – Power, Ethnicity and Violence in the Matabeleland Conflict 1980-1987*. Stockholm: Elanders Novum, 7.

¹⁵ Lederach, John Paul. 2005. *The Moral Imagination – The Art and Soul of Building Peace*. Oxford / New York: Oxford University Press, 141.

¹⁶ Docherty, J. 2001. *Learning Lessons from Waco – When the Parties Bring their Gods to the Negotiation Table*. New York: Syracuse University Press, 49-68.

¹⁷ Mamdani, M. 2001. *When Victims become Killers – Colonialism, Nativism and the Genocide in Rwanda*. Oxford: James Curry Press; Lemarchand, R. 1995. *Burundi: Ethnic Conflict and Genocide*. Cambridge: Woodrow Wilson Center and Cambridge University Press; Richards, P. 1996. *Fighting for the Rain Forest – War, Youth & Resources in Sierra Leone*. Oxford: James Curry; Ignatieff, M. 1998. *The Warrior’s Honour – Ethnic War and the Modern Conscience*. Ontario: Viking – Published by Penguin Group.

¹⁸ Honneth, A. 1995. *The Struggle for Recognition – The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 11.

¹⁹ Volkan, V. 1994. *The Need to have Enemies and Allies*. New Jersey: Jason Aronson Inc.; Bar-On, D. 1999. *The Indescribable and Undiscussable – Reconstructing Human Discourse after Trauma*. Budapest: Central European University Press.

²⁰ Kohler Riessman, C. 1993. *Narrative Analysis*. Oxford: James Curry Ltd., 1.

function. As dominant meta-narratives surface, other competing narratives are frequently relegated to the periphery of society, becoming suppressed, labelled as the dissenting ‘subjugated voices’²¹ outside the status quo. Indeed, a great strength of the mono-narrative lies within its capability to squelch dissident scripts often by brute force. However, the longevity of the mono-narrative depends on its insidious ability to cleverly reframe, correct and absorb the multiple counter-narratives that do arise and in so doing ‘silence’ them through careful ideological suffocation. In his thought-provoking work on historical memory, Michel-Rolph Trouillot writes on what he terms the ‘mentions’ and the ‘silences’ of history:

“By silence, I mean an active and transitive process: one ‘silences’ a fact or an individual as a silencer silences a gun. One engages in the practice of silencing. Mentions and silences are thus active, dialectical counterparts of which history is the synthesis.”²²

Accordingly, when applying Trouillot to the narrative discourse of the Matabeleland conflict, it can be understood as “...an ambiguous blend of ‘mentions’ and ‘silences,’ whereby some peoples and their times are left out of history.”²³ It is precisely this synthesis of the ‘mentions’ (ZANU-PF meta-narrative) and the ‘silences’ (subjugated narratives of the victims of violence in Matabeleland) which have become the focal point of this thesis study.

Approaching the Matabeleland conflict from a narrative perspective; *a socially constructed conflict reality*²⁴ provides a unique analysis that is not evident in the current body of knowledge on this subject. *From a narrative analysis lens, the violence of Matabeleland in the early 1980s can be interpreted as a consequence of the cessation of dialogue and the pre-eminence of a monologue; the voice of one history, one ideology, one political party and one leader.* It is the premise of this research that multiple sites of narrated contestation in Matabeleland were systematically suppressed. This repressive

²¹ Foucault, M. 1980. *Power/Knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings, 1972-1977*. New York: Pantheon Books.

²² Trouillot, M. 1995. *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*. Boston: Beacon Press.

²³ Anderson, K. 1997. *Honorable Mentioning*. Retrieved from the web 07/09/09.

http://weeklywire.com/ww/07-28-97/tw_book2.html

²⁴ Berger, P. & Luckmann, T. 1966. *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. New York: Anchor Books.

silencing of counter multi-narratives resulted in heightening the exacerbating effects of violence unleashed in Matabeleland from 1980 to 1987.

In this Thesis, the application of dramaturgical studies²⁵ to the socio-political conflicts of Matabeleland reveals that the ‘domination-subjugation’ transaction is expressed in the prominence given to the lead protagonists (actors) in the violence, while other significant role-players may be relegated to the position of under-study or assigned the ‘audience-observer’ status. The drama of Matabeleland violence was acted out on the stage of the lives of ordinary people living in Matabeleland. In other words, while it did represent a geographical violence (regional war) in the sense that the violence was carried out in Matabeleland North and South as well as Midlands, the real drama was staged and enacted on the bodies of the civilian masses themselves and the script was created around the fear, manipulation and terror that could be aroused in, and imposed upon the unarmed citizenry. This violence performance is likened to ‘participatory theatre’ where the *actors* on stage (the main protagonists) in this case the ZANU-PF government and its security forces descended off the *stage*, so to speak, and implored, manipulated, coerced and forced the *audience* consisting of Matabeleland community members who were witnessing the unfolding drama, to take part in the whole bloody affair.

This thesis functions as a discourse autopsy of the Matabeleland conflict as a story of the relations between the ‘*narrative communities and constituencies*’ that surrounded ZANU-PF and ZAPU as political organizations throughout the liberation struggle and ultimately the rise of ZANU-PF to solidify its foundational power in Zimbabwe. Once the master narrative of ZANU-PF became the only script in Zimbabwe the majority of socio-political configurations, systems, and organisations were then aligned and submitted to this all encompassing story. Utilising the Matabeleland violence as the research context, this study aims at revealing the crux of power in a monolithic, historical-political narrative discourse that has been fashioned for destructive social ends. Alexander, McGregor and Ranger in their social historical text on Matabeleland articulate this point clearly:

“But their [Zanu-PF] version of nationalist history was decidedly partial. Zimbabwean school books and official histories celebrated the successes of the ruling Zimbabwe African Nationalist Union (Patriotic Front) (ZanuPF) and its

²⁵ Bozzoli, B. 2004. *Theatres of Struggle and the End of Apartheid*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press.

guerrilla army, Zanla. The contribution of Zapu – which was the loser in the national elections of 1980 and whose supporters were concentrated in Matabeleland – was downplayed or denigrated. Zanu (PF) politicians and the state-controlled media cast Zapu and its guerrilla army, Zipra, not as heroic liberators and nation-builders, but as a threat to the country's hard-won independence. A brutal campaign of violence directed against Matabeleland in the 1980s powerfully confirmed this exclusion from the nation."²⁶

At the same time, it is believed that this reflective study will serve as a motivation; a beckoning invitation for the return to a transparent dialogue in Zimbabwe, surfacing the suppressed voices that both 'acted out' and were 'acted on' by the violence of Matabeleland in the early 1980's.

1.4. Thesis Objective and Specific Aims

This study identified four particular elements comprising the research problem under investigation. First, the historical conflict of Matabeleland remains a *subjugated story*; a silenced discourse even up to the present. Second, the ZANU-PF government has not made an official *apology or accepted responsibility* for this violent rupture and as such there remains a high level of trauma among survivors and the victim's families and communities. These wounds cannot be healed until they are given a public voice which requires the engagement in reciprocal processes of acknowledgment and the politics of recognition by all invested stakeholders to the conflict. Third, the past violence necessitates a *re-write of conflict history* in order to bring this critical narrative out from the shadowy margins of its current existence and into the public domain of the Zimbabwean national psyche. Despite the periodic release of a few publications giving voice to the victims of Matabeleland violence²⁷, the ZANU-PF government has refused a public space for the victim narratives to be acknowledged or recognised by the nation. No public forum was ever condoned in which the terror of Gukurahundi could be investigated, explored, confessed or purged from society. Added to this, all counter

²⁶ Alexander, J, McGregor, J, & Ranger, T. 2000. *Violence & Memory – One Hundred Years in the 'Dark Forests' of Matabeleland*. Oxford: James Currey, 1.

²⁷ Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace and Legal Resources Foundation. 1997. *Breaking the Silence, Building True Peace: A Report on the Disturbances in Matabeleland and the Midlands 1980-1988*. Harare: CCJP / LRF; Ranger, T. 1999. *Voices from the Rocks: Nature, Culture & History in the Matapos Hills of Zimbabwe*. Harare: Baobab Publishers; and Alexander, J., McGregor, J., & Ranger, T. 2000. *Violence & Memory – One Hundred Years in the 'Dark Forests' of Matabeleland*. Oxford: James Currey.

narratives were silenced by the dramatic staging of dominant narrative events orchestrated by the ZANU-PF in order to counter any other explanations of reality. Fourth, there is need to explore violence ‘in-context’ in order to shed new light on the interplay between *narrative texts* (scripts) and their relationship to *social construction* of violence and peace for the future. The importance of this research is highlighted in the following set of questions asked by interview respondent JM1, a professor of political science:

“That [the study of narrative] is important because it enables us to better understand the whole process and the whole unfortunate incident. But I don’t know whether you are able to do that without really zeroing in on what was or what were the primary objectives, whose objectives were they? Were they consensually agreed? Or were they in fact viewed as...was Gukurahundi in fact a national project? Or was it a personal project? We need to know that, we need to know who is behind the order. Who is in fact the primary mover of the whole exercise? Who is approving it? Is it seen as something in the public domain, or is it in the private domain? Was the Fifth Brigade a private army or a party army, or was it part of the state machinery, coercive apparatus, and why does it only become integrated in the national army after 1987, you know? Where was it placed organizationally prior to that?”²⁸

Bearing in mind the significance of this research investigation, the overall objective (question) and specific aims (sub-questions) for this Thesis were identified as follows:

- Overall Question: How did narrative discourse mould the violence in Matabeleland, Zimbabwe between the years of 1980-1987, and how has / has not this violence discourse influenced the socio-political crisis being experienced in Matabeleland today?
- Specific Aim One: What are the salient themes (component parts) of the meta-narrative constructed by the ZANU-PF in order to explain and justify the violence that occurred in Matabeleland over this time frame?
- Specific Aim Two: What were the counter-narratives that emerged during this time and how were they subjugated and silenced by the ruling ZANU-PF?
- Specific Aim Three: What are the inter-relational connections between the narrative discourse and the social construction of preferred realities, both of violence and peace in the Zimbabwe context?

²⁸Interview: JM1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 26/02/08 – (Shona Professor of Political Science in Zimbabwe).

- Specific Aim Four: What are the linkages (if any) between the processes of surfacing subjugated and silenced narratives in Matabeleland and finding a durable and sustainable peace in Zimbabwe for the future?

This study is not only concerned with the content (the what?) of the violence story of Matabeleland, but it is also concerned with the form (the how?) of that narrative discourse. How does this suffocating silencing of alternative narratives occur? How does one break the strangulating grip of silence and allow subjugated voices to emerge? How can one encourage the pluralistic space of dialogue in the face of an entrenched homogenous monologue? These and other questions form the backbone of the ensuing narrative analysis of the context of the Matabeleland conflict (1980-87). This analysis, while contextually grounded in a particular region of Matabeleland, Zimbabwe is overlaid with various frames of universality in which the rhetoric of violence and its deconstruction, and the construction of peace can be generally applied in other settings internationally.

1.5. Thesis Structure and Overview of Chapters

This thesis consists of nine chapters and follows a structural flow of three parts. The first part (Chapters 1, 2, and 3) provides the framework in which the research is nested and consists of the introduction, literature review and methodological description and motivation. The second part (Chapters 4-8) lays out the research analysis and findings by exploring the major themes that emerged from the study including narratives of ethnicity, nationalism, loyalty, legitimacy and unity. A separate chapter is dedicated to each one of these particular themes and their unique contribution to the violence meta-narrative constructed by the ZANU-PF government. Due to the nature and flow of narrative analysis the counter (or subjugated) narratives that were unearthed in this research and which serve to deconstruct the ZANU-PF meta-narrative are woven throughout these respective research analysis and findings chapters. The third part (Chapter 9) presents a number of critical issues that surfaced in the research and ties them to peace and reconciliation processes already in operation in the country. A proposed values-based model for transitional justice that addresses the narrative discourse needs of the people of Matabeleland is considered and applied in search of a durable peace in Zimbabwe.

Chapter 2 (Literature Review) threads together three streams of literature; social conflict theory, narratology and peace-building processes. In the first section, the existing body of literature on the Matabeleland conflict is reviewed through the ‘structural-functionalist’ lens of social conflict theory and *practice*. The Matabeleland conflict literature reviewed is argued to fall into four categories of couplets: ethno-cultural, personal-relational, political-structural and historical-ideological. Each of these characterisations is then critiqued against the narrative approach to the analysis of conflict. In the second section, the study of narrative is explored through the lens of *discourse*. Of particular interest here is the intersection between narrative discourse and violent or peaceful construction of preferred realities. Five major currents in the field of Narratology (linguistics, mythology, literary criticism, new historicism and therapeutic models of narrative mediation and ritual) are examined as they relate to the production of discourses of violence or peace. Finally, in section three the swell of literature which highlights the *performative* nature of narrative violence is reviewed. More specifically, this section interrogates the application of ‘dramaturgical theatre’ as a means to analyse and understand the social phenomena of violence construction. Various writings on conceptions of conflict memory, the intersections of temporal and spatial dimensions of conflict and the idea of conflict as political theatre are identified as the conduits through which narrative discourse contributes to the social production of reality.

Chapter 3 (Research Methodology) is about the *story* as a structure for narrative flow; as “*the organising principle for human action*”²⁹. This qualitative research project locates itself within the epistemological frame of ‘interpretive-critical’ analysis. The lens of ‘interpretive-critical’ analysis focuses on three equally important components of narrative discourse; content (*meaning*), structure (*form*) and performance (*interaction*). An integrated research framework is proposed that draws from conceptions of social construction, story analysis, and dramaturgical theatre. The research engages in three different methodologies; literature review, historical document analysis, and thirty-five (35) open interviews conducted over four field visits between the years of 2006 and 2008. As a purposive sample, the interview respondents are motivated as representative of seven sectors of society: political, ex-combatant, media, legal, education, church, women,

²⁹ Kohler Riessman, 1993: 1.

and rural agricultural populations. The interviewees are justified from a cross-section of social-political and economic standing in society from formerly high ranking government officials to rural village farmers. Various forms of research validation and reliability are outlined such as instrument piloting, field journals, member checking and peer review, and corroboration of findings. The chapter concludes with samples of the interview instrument, list of respondents interviewed, and the research programme and schedule.

Chapter 4 concerns itself with the *ethnic-conflict narrative* surrounding the Matabeleland massacres. Moving from the premise that ethnicity is not an in-born (innate or static) state of being this chapter explores the historical ‘ebb and flow’ of ethnic-identity interpretations and conflicts surrounding the Matabeleland since the 1800s. Matabeleland as a region provided the ZANU-PF with a number of *natural ethnic cleavages* that it could distort such as a geographic divide between Ndebele and Shona, the demarcation of ruling party and opposition, majority and minority populations, and an ideological rupture between global Cold-war actors; China and the Soviet Union. Of particular interest is the narrative meaning of certain pivotal patriotic phrases such as ‘*victor and vanquished*’ and ‘*Sons of the Soil*’ and the significance of this kind of language in the formation and subsequent embrace of exclusionary identity labels. These exclusionary ethnic identifications provided the contextual basis for ensuing enemy-formation and the application of ‘justified’ violent aggression between the Ndebele and the Shona populations at specific historical ‘flash-points’ in the Matabeleland past. Ethnic animosity climaxed in Matabeleland through the Gukurahundi campaign of the early 1980s as the fatal rupture of ethnic-hate language and the trauma of severe violence were fused together in the hearts and minds of many Matabele citizenry. The chapter concludes with a series of suppositions that attribute ethnic identity formation to the combined interplay and intersection of collective distorted patriotic history, traumatic memory, and continued political manipulation.

Chapter 5 interrogates the narrative of nationalism and its *ordering* impact on a society. For this study, Zimbabwe’s independence is situated in the context of what has been termed the ‘*failed nation-state*’ or the ‘*exhausted nationalism*’ of Africa. Three elemental components of the nation-building narrative are unpacked in this chapter. First, the difficulties of managing nationalist discourse through the minefields of *revolution* to

negotiation and finally to *rule* are discussed. Second, a case is argued that the ZANU-PF had an ideological need to manufacture a collective *regulatory memory* of the past (patriotic history). Third, evidence is vetted that reveals the ZANU-PF government's 'constructivist' need to produce a *normative experience* for the masses in the present (stage-managed violent conflict) in order to solidify their partisan concept of nationalism. This chapter maintains that the ZANU-PF government has consistently plotted to establish a one-party state and to rule the country with absolute power for life. However, in the post-independence era the ZANU-PF as the ruling party had to face a number of troubling questions: What were they to do with a strong opposition; strong militarily, strong in support among the masses and strong in populist leadership? Building on the natural ethnic cleavages mentioned above, the ZANU-PF appeared to ascribe true nationalism to a particular ethnic group. The ZANU-PF brand of nationalism was buttressed by a socio-political meta-narrative that redefined history, the current reality and what one could believe as politically true or not. All other voices that countered this established ZANU-PF 'truth' were both literally and figuratively subjugated by violence, fear and terror, official control of politics, media, education and security forces, and 'stage-managed' happenings (political theatre) that were utilised to prove the ideological or political power demands of the ZANU-PF. Applying a *dramaturgical analysis* to the nationalist project this chapter follows the flow of key Matabeleland events that were either shaped by, or shaped for the purposes of reinforcing the ZANU-PF nationalist discourse. In the conclusion, the ZANU-PF nationalism is compared to a religion consisting of ritual and ceremonial structures aimed at providing the experience of ascendance; a form of corporate worship of the state.

Chapter 6 concentrates on the conceptions of *loyalty* as key to the process of entrenching nationalism. In simple terms, loyalty is the science of figuring out 'who is in' and 'who is out'. Political loyalty is often built on narratives of *rank, exclusion and embrace*. The loyalty narrative of the ZANU-PF hinged on at least three main elements; enemy-invention, linking scripts of disloyalty with acts of dehumanisation, and the reciprocal texts of political recognition. This chapter connects the process of enemy-formation to the identification of a 'dissident movement' in Matabeleland; what this study refers to as a *manufactured insurgency*. In this case, loyalty and disloyalty were

articulated in the polarising narrative binaries of '*hero*' and '*dissident*'. These designations carry a debilitating effect of deconstruction; the stripping of social identity, political ideology and patriotic history for all those rejected by the ruling ZANU-PF party (mostly Matabeleland citizenry). These scripts of 'belonging' propagated by the ZANU-PF government had a gripping effect on the moral imagination of the nation and were central to the question of the existence of the 'dissidents'. This chapter builds the case that highly contested clusters of narratives have emerged as to the significance of the dissident threat (high, medium or low?), the justification of the ZANU-PF violent response in Matabeleland (was it defence, to wipe-out opposition, or genocide?), and the implications for an attainable peace in Zimbabwe for the future (uniformity, power-sharing, or Matabeleland secession?).

Chapter 7 grapples with the idea of *legitimacy* as a precursor to the demand for loyalty. Possessing legitimacy begs the question of sourcing. In Zimbabwe there has been a growing disconnect between the legitimacy to govern sourced in the ruling party and the people they purport to lead. This chapter maintains that immediately after independence the ZANU-PF staked its claim to legitimacy in the narrative of violence, which was initially effective as it reinforced their liberation fighter credentials and the continuous militarisation of the state. However, as the ZANU-PF turned its state-sanctioned 'legitimate' violence on the civilian populace of Matabeleland it lost its credibility to lead. Failing to subvert the Matabeleland resistance by force, the ZANU-PF attempted to extend its indirect violent legitimacy through the region of Matabeleland by employing certain *disciplinary functions* necessary to retain power and further monitor and control all sectors of the public political domain. These measures of disciplinary surveillance failed to invoke the legitimacy that the ZANU-PF intended and instead they entrenched narratives of *protest* from the people who experienced these repressive actions. The chapter concludes with a narrative autopsy on the characteristics, structures and motivations behind systematic violence as employed by the ZANU-PF in Matabeleland in the early 1980s.

Chapter 8 focuses on the Unity Accord of 1987 with special attention being given to the narratives of *uniformity and diversity* that surfaced at that time. Heralded as the end of violence and the beginning of unity by the ZANU-PF government, the Unity

Accord was framed within the language of triumphant diplomacy. However, for many of the Matabeleland masses the Unity Accord represented a complete defeat, loss of political identity and a compromised ceasefire with the only redeeming factor being the end of the killing. Moreover, it failed to address the diversity needs of the Matabeleland region. Key to the protest narrative of the Matabeleland opposition was the descriptive narrative of ZAPU being ‘swallowed-up’ by ZANU-PF. This chapter promulgates the argument that the Unity Accord was a defining moment in the history of the Matabeleland violence. For the ZANU-PF it was a victory for the solidification of a one-party state and for the Matabeleland opposition it was a silencing of the narratives of resistance against hegemony. The chapter concludes with a discussion of how the repression of uniformity can sometimes be masqueraded in official narratives of unity.

Chapter 9 as the concluding portion of this thesis delves into what is termed ‘emancipatory’ narratives and the search for durable peace in Zimbabwe. In an effort to link the past and present violence of Matabeleland, this chapter identifies various organising frameworks that emerged from the research; eclipsing narratives, multiple layers of victims, and the lack of a future view. In search of harmonising narratives, the chapter explores how to resuscitate a unifying memory, corporate belonging and responsibility, vibrant public participation and engaged collective healing processes. The chapter concludes with an invitation to release emancipatory narratives through a proposed values-based transitional justice model aimed at sustainable peace in Zimbabwe.

1.6. Navigating through the Maze of Silenced Narratives

In his incisive essays on the Haitian revolution against the French in 1791, Michel-Rolph Trouillot argues that this uprising was in fact the first recorded successful native revolution against colonial tyranny, but it was silenced in history because of the implications that this self-organised black resistance had on the dominant racist worldview of colonial Europe at the time. Trouillot identifies and articulates two major forms of historical silencing that have been employed in order to ensure that this revolution would be forgotten in the production of power in history:

“The first kind of tropes are formulas that tend to erase directly the fact of a revolution. I call them, for short, formulas of erasure. The second kind tends to empty a number of singular events of their revolutionary context so that the entire

string of facts, gnawed from all sides, becomes trivialized. I call them formulas of banalization. The first kind of tropes characterizes mainly the generalists and the popularizers – textbook authors, for example. The second are the favourite tropes of the specialists...Both are formulas of silence.”³⁰

The ZANU-PF government became masters of both the above-mentioned formulas of silencing by their continuous manufacture of biased patriotic history (erasure) and the perpetual barrage of oratorical rhetoric (trivialisation) through their ‘official’ channels of propaganda such as the state-run media, political speeches, and the infamous Ministry of Information as the mouthpiece for the ruling party.

This Thesis attempts to produce a counter intuitive process of narrative analysis that neither erases nor trivialises the history of the Matabeleland massacres of Zimbabwe. It takes seriously the broad strokes of revolutionary drive present in both the structures of ZANU and ZAPU that liberated Zimbabwe in 1980. It respects the moral cause of justice for the freedom of the black majority from the tyranny of white minority rule in Zimbabwe. It acknowledges the violent complexities, the chosen glories and chosen traumas, and the dilemmas of leadership struggle throughout the independence war. The emancipation of black Zimbabwe is an unequivocal truth that must remain untouched. For this just cause historical revisionists should resist all forms of erasure or trivialisation.

With this standard as a vanguard, this thesis purposes to enshrine the forgotten history of the Matabeleland violence of the early 1980s. By extracting and analysing the narrative details of the memory of Matabeleland victims and survivors of violence, this study aims to hold a light to the many people who suffered death, disappearance, kidnapping, torture, rape, beatings and other forms of physical and emotional humiliation at the hands of the state-sponsored security forces between 1980 and 1987. It desires to hold a light to the ZANU-PF revolutionary leaders who claim to be the ‘saviours’ of the poor and oppressed and yet use the same repressive violence that they suffered under to torment those they claim to lead. It insists on holding light to the regenerative violence of victims becoming killers, of freedom fighters becoming dictators, of history repeating itself. The voices of those in Matabeleland who were victimised by those claiming to be their liberationists will not be erased, nor will they be trivialised by state-sanctioned patriotic history and narrative manipulation and subjugation.

³⁰ Trouillot, M. 1995: 96.

The silenced scripts of Matabeleland must be recovered or they will be sacrificed on the Alter of erasure; being continually denied, minimised and rationalised away by the official historical script of the international community and the ruling ZANU-PF party; or they will be lost on the dusty shelves of memorial archives, swallowed in the passing of time and by the bureaucratic appetite of specialists trivialisation. The integrity of history demands this re-telling of the Matabeleland injustice to guard against formulas of erasure or banalisation which would want to render the reality of the Matabeleland conflict as irrelevant, an artefact of obsolete history. The Matabeleland violence of 1980-1987 stands at the crux of the matter of history silenced. The story must be told and retold.

Chapter 2: Literature Review – Exploring Narratives of Conflict and Peace

2.1. Introduction

This chapter explores the intersection between the fields of social conflict theory, narratology and peace-building. The literary sources being reviewed are interrogated in a tri-partite model which describes the ontology of violent conflict as revealed in *practice*, *discourse* and *performance*.³¹ The first section on *practice* examines the available literature published on the Matabeleland conflict and categorises it according to the most salient social conflict theories. Most available literature on the Matabeleland conflict is extrapolated from a **structural-functionalist** framework of social conflict theory.³² There is a minimal body of literature published specifically on the Matabeleland violence of the 1980s, and the discourse that emanates from this literature is primarily clustered around nodes of ethno-cultural, personal-relational, political-structural and historical-ideological interpretations of conflict origin.

The second section on *discourse* introduces and explores the conception of **narratology** (the study of narrative discourse); its ‘root’ beginnings, its theories and its application to the topic at hand. Spanning a considerable period of time, this section posits a progression from the study of linguistics and its subsequent overlap with the anthropological parley on mythology. Further application then moves into the realm of literary criticism, new historicism and finally narrative as practice. Central to this discussion is the sociological constructivist thinking which espouses the idea that phenomena like conflict and peace are socially constructed by the relational-behaviour interactions emanating from narrative discourse.

The third and final section on *performance* gives credence to pivotal theories from the conflict and **peace-building** fields that integrate the material, social and symbolic³³ components of analysis in contexts of collective violence. To this end, three primary frames of conflict theory will be explored in relation to narrative discourse; first,

³¹ Richards, P. 1996. *Fighting for the Rain Forest – War, Youth & Resources in Sierra Leone*. The International African Institute, Oxford: James Curry, xxi-xxiv.

³² See critical social conflict theorists such as: Marx, K. *Das Kapital*: 1867; Parsons, T. *The Structure of Social Action*: 1937; Simmel, G. *Conflict and the Web of Group Affiliation*, 1956; Coser, L.A. *The Functions of Social Conflict*: 1956; Dahrendorf, R. *Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society*: 1959; Weber, M. *Economy and Society*: 1968; Curle, A. *Making Peace*. 1971; Kriesberg, L. *The Sociology of Social Conflicts*: 1973; Collins, R. *Conflict Sociology*: 1975.

³³ Schirch, L. 2005. *Ritual and Symbol in Peacebuilding*. Connecticut: Kumarian Press, Inc., 33.

conceptions of conflict memory; second, intersections of temporal and spatial dimensions of conflict; and third, conflict as political theatre of struggle. In essence, this literature review lays the foundation to understand how the violence script was carefully crafted and socially reproduced by the ZANU-PF regime and then enforced on the psyche and experiential canvasses of the Matabeleland people during the Gukurahundi conflict of the early 1980s.

2.2. Section One: Practice - Social Conflict Theory and the Matabeleland Violence

Practice theory concerns itself with the interrogation of how knowledge is produced through experiential processes. Contrary to the rationalities of abstract thought, practice theory stems from the notion that knowledge emerges from “context and action”, not just by means of “cognition and training”³⁴. Learning then grows out of the routine of daily human activity, a process of “kinetic” trial and error not formal calculations.³⁵ Thus, in practice, theory knowledge is birthed from a cycle of action-reflection only to be tested again through a reapplication to yet another action-reflection cycle of learning.

While some of the founding theories of social conflict evolved from observation and systematic application of social science research, by and large social conflict theory has been nursed from practice in the midst of real-time social conflicts (Fanon’s writing on violence and the oppressive colonial system in Algeria provides a clear example of this).³⁶ In this case, the violence itself is seen as actively and forcibly forging new pathways for social change. Many of the dominant paradigms of social conflict theory have their origins in the lessons that are discovered after practitioners have passed through a guided process of intentional reflection on their own conflict management processes and the consequential outcomes.

Most of the writing on the Matabeleland conflict follows the reflective pathways and patterns of well-recognised social conflict theories. For purposes of this study, these theories have been grouped as *ethno-cultural*, *personal-relational*, *political-structural* and *historical-ideological* interpretations of conflict origin. The conception of power is not listed as a separate element in these configurations because it is the premise of this research that all of these dyads are descriptive of instrumentalities *through* which power

³⁴ Bourdieu, P. 1979. *Outline of A Theory of Practice*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

³⁵ Richards, 1996: xxi.

³⁶ Fanon, F. 1963. *The Wretched of the Earth*. England: Penguin Books.

is expressed. In other words, the exertion of power is the endgame outcome; the means to that end are wrapped in the different packages categorised above.

This research proposes that narrative discourse becomes the unifying factor, the glue that holds together the various means of power expression being explored in this section. Narrative discourse as a centrifugal ordering principle for the explanation of Matabeleland violence is consistently absent in a categorical review of literature published on this period of history. This research argues that a durable peace in Zimbabwe is only possible if the violence narrative of Gukurahundi is deconstructed and a new narrative of justice and reconciliation is constructed in its stead.

2.2.1. Ethno-Cultural Interpretations

With the back-drop of entangled and often stormy relations between the ethnic groups labelled 'Ndebele' and 'Shona' in Zimbabwe history, the Matabeleland conflict provides seed-bed for the classic ethno-culturalist debate of origin and its relationship to socio-political conflict; is ethnic identity innate or constructed? Ethno-cultural 'essentialists' argue for a unique, inherited sense of ethnic identity based on biological traits and cultural traditions that are the basis for instinctual defensive violence and are collectively transmitted from one generation to another. Ethno-culturalist thinking remains a strong draw for a small grouping of academics and populist writers when analysing violence in Zimbabwe.

Royal Prince Peter Zwide Khumalo argues to keep the cultural traditions of the Umthwakazi (Ndebele Nation) because "the culture has unique features and those features have a value of their own that cannot or rather should not be eclipsed by any other cultural impositions."³⁷ Khumalo continues with the following critique, "The concept of 'culture as dynamic' has been in most cases abused to discard that culture or belief that defines UBUNTU."³⁸ Writing within the context of Zimbabwean politics, Masipula Sithole argues that despite the apparent political manipulation of identities, the Zimbabwean masses still tend to vote along ethnic lines. In other words, contrary to the Marxist class analysis, ethnicity trumps class categorisation when it comes to the masses

³⁷ Khumalo, P. 2006. *Background on Local Cultures*. Paper presented at the Bulawayo Agenda Conference on Ethnicity, Holiday Inn, Bulawayo, 30 June, 2.

³⁸ Ibid:10.

political affiliations.³⁹ Enocent Msindo provides a reversal critique of the 1929 Bulawayo Faction Fights⁴⁰, debunking the generally held Marxist class analysis of this event as propagated by Phimister & van Onselen⁴¹. Msindo maintains three arguments: first, that there was evidence of organised efforts to identify and categorise the ‘Shona’ as enemies; second, that all Shona people were targeted for violence not just the newly arrived job-seekers; and third, that the Ndebele-Shona divide was manifest in at least five competitive social arenas: labour, sport, class, politics, and culture. However, Terence Ranger argues against an ethnic-based theory of the event of 1929 and instead describes this conflict rupture as a contestation over social capital and who was to have the power of setting societal trends and thereby affecting relational interactions: “But above all the claims of clever and smart young migrant men to define the ‘style’ of Bulawayo were being violently repudiated.”⁴²

Contrary to the ethnic essentialist ideation, a growing body of knowledge is being amassed that strongly argues against cultural identity essentialism. Proponents of this argument maintain that “ideas, beliefs, classifications, perceptions of risk, etc. are tied to, and shaped by, systematic features of community organization (specifically, the degree to which people are bound into institutions reflecting hierarchical, egalitarian or individualistic orientations)”⁴³. Already in the late 1960s, Fredrik Barth released a treatise on ethnicity in which he stated, “that ethnic identity is socially constructed, that it is dependent on situations, and that it is used instrumentally”⁴⁴.

These notions are substantiated in the research conducted by Stafford Glass on the Matabele War of 1893. Glass documents the military organisation and prowess of the Matabele people and how the colonial powers not only feared and respected them for this power; subsequently behaved opportunistically by according the Ndebele precedence

³⁹ Sithole, M. 1985. “The Salience of Ethnicity in African Politics: The Case of Zimbabwe”. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, XX (3-4): 187-190.

⁴⁰ Msindo, E. 2006. “Ethnicity, not Class? The 1929 Bulawayo Faction Fights Reconsidered”. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 32 (3): 429-447.

⁴¹ Phimister, I. and van Onselen, C. 1979. “The Political Economy of Tribal Animosity: A Case Study of the 1929 Bulawayo Location ‘Faction Fight’”. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 6 (1): 1-43.

⁴² Ranger, T. 2006. “The Meaning of Urban Violence in Africa: Bulawayo, Southern Rhodesia, 1890-1960”. *The Journal of Cultural and Social History Society* 3 (2): 218.

⁴³ Richards, P. 1995: xxiv.

⁴⁴ Barth, as quoted by Lindgren, B. 2004. “The Internal Dynamics of Ethnicity: Clan Names, Origins and Castes in Southern Zimbabwe”. *Africa*, 74 (2): 175. (Source: Barth, F. 1969. Introduction, in Barth, F (Ed.) *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: the social organization of cultural difference*, London: Allan and Unwin).

over the Shona in intelligence, organisation and superiority (a classic ethnic ‘divide and rule’ tactic). However, it was only in the advent of the Matabele War of 1893, where the Ndebele challenged white rule and the imperialist indignation was fully awakened that the colonial rulers began to justify their violence against the Ndebele as a means of “protecting” the Shona and began recruiting Shona men to fight with them against the Matabele.⁴⁵ This same idea is born out in the work of Eliakim Sibanda who maintains that the colonial version of history highly exaggerated these ethnic divisions: “Basically, according to this [white] version, the AmaNdebele held the Shona who, were the rightful heirs to Zimbabwe, in slavery until the settlers themselves rescued them.”⁴⁶

In his research around military hierarchy, race and ethnicity in the Rhodesian Native Regiment of World War I, Tim Stapleton makes a clear case for racial and ethnic manipulation by the colonial rulers. Not only were all native regiments commanded by white officers, but these officers often favoured Ndebele soldiers over Shona recruits. The prejudice here being that the Ndebele were seen as born ‘warriors’; more highly skilled and equipped for battle than the Shona. While historically, it has been documented that the Ndebele did maintain a more sophisticated military structure and history than the Shona, this stereotype played itself out in the place of promotion within the Rhodesian Native Regiment. Despite similar training and evidenced individual merit, the Ndebele fighters were consistently given the higher posts of rank, authority, responsibility (special operations) and commendation above the Shona in this Regiment.⁴⁷

In his fascinating study of the internal sub-divisions within seemingly unified tribal groupings, Bjorn Lindgren makes the case that ethnic identity is considerably more layered than the essentialist view propagates. Lindgren extrapolates on the three classifications of clan names (*isibongo*) in the Ndebele culture that connote a separate position or ‘caste’ order within the socio-economic web of intra-clan relationships (the *Zanzi* representing royalty, *Enhla* representing other incorporated tribes, and *Lozwi/Holi*

⁴⁵ Glass, S. 1968. *The Matabele War*. London and Harlow: Longmans, Green and Co. Ltd.

⁴⁶ Sibanda, E. 2004. *The Zimbabwe African People’s Union, 1961-87 – A Political History of Insurgency in Southern Rhodesia*. New Jersey: Africa World Press, 10.

⁴⁷ Stapleton, T. 2005. “Military Hierarchy, Race and Ethnicity in the German East African Campaign: The Case of the Rhodesia Native Regiment (1916-1918)”. *War & Society Journal*, 24 (2): 1-11.

representing the slave or servant class⁴⁸). In sum, Lindgren and others cited in this section argue against ethnic-cultural essentialism by insisting on the nullification of homogeneity as a primary element to the essentialist worldview and by thickening the nuance of ranking within a given ethnic configuration in a specific historical-political context. Thus, to deduce that the Matabeleland violence was caused by primarily an ethnic-based conflict is to be seduced by reductionism and oversimplification.

2.2.2. A Critique of the Ethno-Cultural Interpretation

The distinctiveness of particular identities, ethnicities and cultures, however, is not the primary concern here. Instead of engaging in the polarised debate of the merits of essentialist verses constructivist frames of ethnic reference, this study argues that it is vital to interrogate the process by which healthy differences (constructed diversities) become mutually exclusive (essentialist ideations). The exclusivist ideation is provoked by the threat of extinction, when life or death, livelihood or poverty, honour or humiliation is at stake. The key question then is how or when does this distinctiveness which is an inherent characteristic of the essentialist worldview become exclusive and destructive?

This research puts forward the notion that it is precisely through the conduit of divisive narrative discourse (an articulation of the other as ‘enemy’) that an essentialist cultural outlook can morph into an exclusivist proposition resulting in oppression, violence and death. Thus, it becomes apparent that when essentialist ideas are articulated in exclusivist rhetoric, violence can be justified and acted out. Once violence is acted upon, a form of social construction has been transacted and the intimate connection between essentialist *thinking* and constructivist *action* through the vehicle of destructive narrative discourse becomes evident. This study proposes that these impulses of ‘essentialist thinking-constructivist action’, as birthed in a violence-inciting narrative discourse, are part of the dynamics that propelled the Matabeleland conflict of the early 1980s.

⁴⁸ Lindgren, B. 2004. “The Internal Dynamics of Ethnicity: Clan Names, Origins and Castes in Southern Zimbabwe”. *Journal of the International African Institute*, 74 (2):177-179.

2.2.3. Personal-Relational Interpretations

Volumes of pages have been written in an attempt to deconstruct the personality and psychological conflict profile of Robert Mugabe, the President of Zimbabwe (Chan, 2003; Hill, 2005; Meredith, 2007)⁴⁹. Scores of memoirs from well-known political activists or journalist have recently appeared on the bookstore shelves (Meldrum, 2004; Godwin, 2006; Nyarota, 2006; Todd, 2007)⁵⁰. Autobiographies and personal stories from all sides of the political spectrum vie for the spotlight of public attention to be turned on their particular slice of truth (Nkomo, 1984; Buckle, 2002; Chung, 2006)⁵¹. All of these genres are aimed at a popular readership and as such are full of the necessary ingredients of mystery and drama required to satisfy the demand of the public interest.

The personal-relational lens of interpretation concentrates on the intrigue of the individual persona and the magnitude of actual or perceived power that he/she exhibits in the relational context. Stephen Chan (2003) writes with the reason and the caution of a true diplomat. His analysis carefully tracks the life of Robert Mugabe; his growing years, his rise to power in the ranks of the liberation movement, his favoured era of the first eighteen years of rule, and then his 'fall from grace' between 1998 and 2002. Halfway through his book, Chan summarises his findings in nine points that revolve around Mugabe's intellect, ideology, pragmatism, style of leadership, sincere belief in what he stands for, manipulation of issues of war and land, need for political endorsement from world leaders, diplomatic abilities, and his continual need for personal validation through ongoing elections.⁵² This form of personality-based assessment is the norm in many political analyst circles because negotiation between high profile government figures dominates the diplomat's professional skill-base and worldview. For other examples

⁴⁹ Chan, S. 2003. *Robert Mugabe: A Life of Power and Violence*. London and New York: I.B. Tauris & Co, Ltd.; Hill, G. 2005. *What Happens After Mugabe: Can Zimbabwe Rise from the Ashes?* Cape Town: Zebra Press; Meredith, M. 2002, 2003, 2007. *Mugabe: Power, Plunder and the Struggle for Zimbabwe*. Johannesburg and Cape Town: Jonathan Ball Publishers.

⁵⁰ Meldrum, A. 2004. *Where We Have Hope: A Memoir of Zimbabwe*. London: John Murray. ; Nyarota, J. 2006. *Against the Grain: Memoirs of a Zimbabwean Newsmen*. Cape Town: Zebra Press. ; Godwin, P. 2006. *When a Crocodile Eats the Sun: A Memoir*. Johannesburg: Picador Africa. ; Todd, J.G. 2007. *Through the Darkness: A Life in Zimbabwe*. Cape Town: Zebra Press.

⁵¹ Nkomo, J. 1984. *Nkomo: The Story of My Life*. London: Methuen. ; Buckle, C. 2002. *Beyond Tears: Zimbabwe's Tragedy*. Johannesburg and Cape Town: Jonathan Ball Publishers. ; Chung, F. 2006. *Re-living the Second Chimurenga: Memories from the Liberation Struggle in Zimbabwe*. Uppsala: The Nordic Africa Institute and Harare: Weaver Press.

⁵² Chan, S. 2003. *Robert Mugabe: A Life of Power and Violence*. 132-134.

showcasing this kind of track-one diplomatic intervention void of multiple levels of local representation, see Africa case studies by Hare⁵³, Hume⁵⁴, and Sahoun⁵⁵.

2.2.4. A Critique of the Personal-Relational Interpretation

While these forms of published works make for popular reading and contribute to the recording of history through personal story, they fall short in assisting this study to meet at least two of its pivotal objectives. Firstly, they are anecdotal in style and thereby tend to oversimplify the conflict by focusing on the behaviours and actions of lone protagonists, as if individual public figures act in isolation. It may be interesting to read about the curious lives of notorious political leaders, but the resultant outcome is often a misappropriation of blame assigned to individual persons for the causes of complex social conflicts. An example is the recent DVD production by the young journalist-activist Zenzele Ndebele, one of several explanations of why the Gukurahundi violence occurred was that of personal vendetta. According to the film, Mugabe may have had a personal score to avenge as his father left his mother when he was a young boy and moved to Matabeleland where he remarried an Ndebele woman.⁵⁶ While this theory may have a conspiratorial appeal, it would be problematic to hang the complexities of the Matabeleland conflict on the premise of one man's personal need for vengeance. This cautionary note is not, however, an attempt to negate the potential power of Mugabe's

⁵³ Hare, P. 1998. *Angola's last best chance for Peace*. Washington DC: USIP Press. In this entire book (of 146 pages), Hare only mentions in one sentence the possible limitations of the top-down approach to peace-making and I quote: "*the situation on the ground seriously deteriorated in the following weeks, revealing a disjunction between what had been achieved at the formal level and what was actually a happening in the countryside.*" (p.144). He makes no reference, not even subtle, to the track-two activity that was occurring on a parallel basis during his supposed vital negotiations at the State level, nor does he intimate or analyze the critical role of civil society players as being important to the peace-building process.

⁵⁴ Hume, C. 1994. *Ending Mozambique's War*. Washington DC: USIP Press. In this work, the author gives more acknowledgement of track-two diplomacy specifically as it relates to the significant mediation role played by the Community Sant'Egidio, a church/civil society representative. Unfortunately, the analysis remained almost anecdotal; highly technical, legal and diplomatically uni-dimensional. For example, and I quote: "*In this conflict the FRELIMO government and the RENAMO insurgency were the protagonist and antagonist. These two central players would have to cooperate for any process of dialogue and reconciliation to succeed.*" (p.22).

⁵⁵ Sahoun, M. 1994. *Somalia – The Missed Opportunities*. Washington DC: USIP Press. This publication was a highly bureaucratic and personally defensive account of the disastrous UN intervention in Somalia in 1993, under the leadership of the author himself. Aside from the expression of compassion for those suffering under this tremendous humanitarian crisis, the author does not allude to, or explore the very complex contextual peace-making process of the Somali culture where the entire negotiation dialogue can take the form of a contest of proverbs or wisdom-sayings among the Clan Elders.

⁵⁶ Ndebele, Z. 2007. *Gukurahundi: A Moment of Madness*, a DVD production.

childhood trauma as one of many conscious or sub-conscious driving factors in his personal life narrative.

Secondly, the personal-relational frame can fail to give deeper interpretation to the interconnectivities of the socio-political systems that these actors operate from within. Again, the work of Chan offers an example of this dilemma. Chan's work has been described as follows: "[a] tightly argued and rigorous narrative, based on close personal knowledge of Zimbabwe, [which] depicts the emergence of a ruthless and single-minded despot amassing and firmly clinging to his power. We follow the triumphant nationalist leader, reconciling all in the new multi-racial Zimbabwe, degenerate into a petty tyrant consumed by hubris and self righteousness facing an endgame of potentially horrifying dimensions"⁵⁷. In this representation alone, the reader is led to believe that Mugabe as an individual holds all power, reconciles all of Zimbabwe, and is the only person who may suffer a destructive end. This research maintains that all persons (including the likes of Mugabe) speak and act within certain plural contextual realities, i.e. a set of social assumptions and networks that give meaning to what they say and do.

The personal-relational analysis privileges *individual agency*; it dissects the personal narrative as if it exists in a void making up the sum total of reality. It glorifies the individual story as having 'stand-alone' universal quality. While the personal-relational narrative is useful to understand individual personalities, behaviours and attached motivations, it rarely accounts for collective agency. The sense that human beings act out larger; multiple corporate narratives must be given credence in order to truly comprehend the fullness of constructed social reality.

2.2.5. Political-Structural Interpretations

In contrast to the personal-relational lens of analysis, the political-structural framework privileges *collective agency* above individual agency. For the first two decades after Zimbabwe's independence, the structural interpretation dominated most political thought and analysis from both internal and external sources. The reasons for this are at least three-fold: first, a political-structural analysis is foundational to revolutionary ideologies; second, to analyse the socio-political climate in Zimbabwe from any other framework smacked of anti-revolutionary sentiments; and third, the political-

⁵⁷ Chan, S. 2003. *Robert Mugabe: A Life of Power and Violence*. (Back cover).

structural interpretation justified early repressive attitudes by the State. Thus, the political-structural explanation was used to bolster and nurture the meta-narrative of the newly elected mass-based liberation government of ZANU-PF.

For instance, in 1990, Victor De Waal wrote in glowing terms about the quest for unity in Zimbabwe one decade into independence citing the most urgent reconciliation agenda being that of “forgiving those blacks who were part of the internal settlement of 1978-9”⁵⁸ referring to the breakaway black political leaders Abel Muzorewa and Ndabaningi Sithole. Likewise, in 1991 Ibbo Mandaza and Lloyd Sachikonye⁵⁹ opened up a highly intellectual and well-tempered debate on the merits and demerits of a one-party state, with an underlying assumption that there will always be the ‘democratic space’ for this contentious debate and that finally, the ‘will of the people’ will be honoured. Both of these writings exemplify the dominant political-structural belief that the Unity Accord of 1987-8 had resolved the Matabeleland conflict to the extent that De Waal did not feel it necessary to include Gukurahundi as one of the reconciliation agendas of Zimbabwe in 1990, while Mandaza and Sachikonye assumed that the democracy was taking root in Zimbabwe in 1991 despite the state-sanctioned violence unleashed against the dissident movement in Matabeleland between 1980-88:

“However, if the state is also indeed a terrain of struggles – and the last eleven years demonstrate this - then some of the pessimism or dismissiveness towards the potential and trajectory of on-going democratic struggles are overdrawn...the abandonment of the intention to install a *de jure* one-party state is only one example where the state has had to make a concession to pressure from the civil society. This provides grounds for optimism for the outcome of related democratic struggles in the future.”⁶⁰

Even more recently, Fay Chung’s memoirs of the ‘Second Chimurenga’ released in 2006, unabashedly rehearses the ideological script of the ZANU-PF’s liberation rhetoric. Preben Kaarsholn of the Nordic Africa Institute, who writes the introduction for Chung’s book, produces no apology for his critique of her stance: “In her memoirs, Fay Chung seems to support Robert Mugabe’s and the ZANU(PF)’s attempt – through the ‘Third Chimurenga’ – to monopolise the history of the liberation struggle, pose themselves as its

⁵⁸ De Waal, V. 1990. *The Politics of Reconciliation – Zimbabwe’s First Decade*. London & Cape Town: Hurst & Co. & David Philip, 99.

⁵⁹ Mandaza, I & Sachikonye, L. (Eds.) (1991). *The One Party State and Democracy – The Zimbabwe Debate*. Southern Africa: Sapes Books.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 15.

only rightful heir, and dismiss the challenge of democratic opposition as something alien and hostile to this historical mission.”⁶¹

Thus, while the political-structural frame was utilised to encourage a status quo view of the state, one that made criticism of the state very unfashionable in the first few decades of independent Zimbabwe⁶², variations of the same frame of analysis became a vital form of evaluation used to critique and deconstruct the state apparatus and the ruling party starting in 1998 and onwards. For example, Timothy Scarnecchia makes the strong case for the parallels between the formations of a fascist cycle in Italy between the years of 1920-1924 and Zimbabwe between the years 2000-2005:

“[Scarnecchia’s] comparison focuses on the following areas: the state’s use of paramilitary organisations, or militias, to maintain or regain control; the abuse of legislative and judicial powers to protect ruling party interests; party membership as a prerequisite for involvement in basic areas of social and economic life; and the primacy of political survival over strategic economic planning.”⁶³

Volumes of analysis on the current Zimbabwe dilemma have cascaded into the public purview since 2000, exposing the many and varied battlegrounds on which the narratives of the Zimbabwean people and the narrative of the ruling elite has been pitted against each other over issues such as unionization, economy, militarization, land redistribution, opposition politics, war veterans, human rights, justice, detainment and torture and women’s roles and concerns.

Suzanne Dansereau⁶⁴, Brian Raftopoulos and Lloyd Sachikonye⁶⁵ document the relationship of the Zimbabwe Unions and the ruling ZANU-PF. Starting with a highly amicable relationship directly after independence, these authors chart the widening chasm that developed over time as ZANU-PF struggled to keep control of the unions which were becoming increasingly independent in their critique and even shrill in their

⁶¹ Chung, F. 2006. *Re-living the Second Chimurenga – Memoirs from the Liberation Struggle in Zimbabwe*. The Nordic Africa Institute and Weavers Press, 24.

⁶² There were assuredly few exceptions to this trend, however they are worth noting. Saul, J. 1977. “Transforming the Struggle in Zimbabwe”, *Southern Africa*, February and Saul, J. 1980. “Zimbabwe: The Next Round”, *Monthly Review*, Vol. 32, No. 4, September; Astrow, A. 1983. *Zimbabwe: A Revolution that Lost its Way?* London: Zed Books; and Moore, D. 1991. “The Ideological Formation for the Zimbabwean Ruling Class”, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 3, September; 472-495.

⁶³ Scarnecchia, T. 2006. “The ‘Fascist Cycle’ in Zimbabwe, 2000-2005”. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 32 (2): 221-237.

⁶⁴ Dansereau, S. 2002. *Liberation and Opposition in Zimbabwe*. Free download from www.hsrbpress.ac.za

⁶⁵ Raftopoulos, B. & Sachikonye, L. (Eds.) (2001). *Striking Back: The Labour Movement and the Post-Colonial State in Zimbabwe 1980-2000*. Weaver Press

condemnation of the economic policies of ZANU-PF, especially as it related to workers rights. The rift between the narrative of the government and the narrative of the unions in describing the Zimbabwean workers' reality became so contradictory that the ZANU-PF intervened by force and replaced the union leadership; the disenfranchised remnant union leadership fomented the opposition movement into what it is today.

On Zimbabwean economics, Patrick Bond and Masimba Manyanya caution readers not to fall into the binary debate of 'exhausted nationalism' or 'neo-liberalism', both of whose narrative discourses no longer hold sway with the poor and their daily conditions of hunger and suffering: "Separating the truth from the myth-making in ZANU's repertoire is important, for the contestation of political rhetoric and reality remains profound"⁶⁶. Bond and Manyanya, in striving to define a new narrative, believe there is a third way of 'social justice struggle': "...it is eminently feasible for genuinely democratic social forces in Zimbabwe to engage in social struggle that serves the interests of the majority and puts deeper political-economic dilemmas (such as debt) on to the table for debate"⁶⁷. Echoing Bond and Manyanya, Brian Raftopoulos⁶⁸ also speaks of the crisis in Zimbabwe whereby rightist neo-liberal policies have been shrouded by leftist socialist rhetoric; this is commonly referred to as 'talking left and acting right.' Raftopoulos also touts an alternative economic narrative, a discourse that he believes could have taken care of the structural-land and material-economic needs while at the same time securing human rights and the necessary democratic space for all Zimbabweans. However, in its all-consuming effort to retain and entrench itself in power, ZANU-PF never provided the necessary space or time for this kind of comprehensive narrative to emerge. This lost opportunity could explain the mystifying disconnect between the abundant intellectual capital resident in the ZANU-PF government and their inability to find their way out of the present day political-economic crisis.

⁶⁶ Bond, P. & Manyanya, M. 2002. *Zimbabwe's Plunge – Exhausted Nationalism, Neo-liberalism and the Search for Social Justice*. Durban: University of Natal Press, 68.

⁶⁷ Ibid. xvi.

⁶⁸ Raftopoulos, B. 2006. "The Zimbabwean Crisis and the Challenges for the Left". *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 32 (2): 203-219.

Authors Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni⁶⁹ and Muchaparara Musemwa⁷⁰ locate the debate on political economies in Zimbabwe within the frame of ‘disciplinary’⁷¹ nature of development practices driven by politics. Ndlovu-Gatsheni explores the disciplinary nature of the geo-political economic system on the development of Zimbabwe as a nation: “...[the author] situates the Zimbabwe crisis within the current global environment, which is characterised by triumphant neo-liberalism and its concern with maintaining the status quo through aggressive ‘disciplining’ of any alternative way of imagining the world.”⁷² Musemwa illustrates a ‘disciplinary’ development process by tracking the political neglect of Bulawayo and the Matabeleland region by the ZANU-PF government. Of special significance is the failure of ZANU-PF leadership to act in good faith to complete the Zambezi Water Project, a promised development project conceived at independence and still outstanding today. Despite on-going financial and bureaucratic reasons stated by the authorities to explain this delay, Musemwa maintains that this situation is a prime example of the politicisation of development, with the ZANU-PF elite masterfully using this denial of development in order to entrench its power and to ‘discipline’ and isolate the political opposition rooted in Matabeleland. This specific form of ‘discipline’ becomes even more sinister when one considers that the Matabeleland is a climatically arid region which has historically suffered from cyclical seasons of drought.

To understand the Matabeleland violence of the early 1980s, it is necessary to also interrogate the militarisation of Zimbabwean society as whole. The militarization analysis of Matabeleland would need to consider pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial eras of time. Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni’s work around civil-military relations and the nationalist-military alliance in Zimbabwe provide important scholarly insights into the structures of militarisation and their far-reaching implications for life in Zimbabwe today. In regards to pre-colonial times, Ndlovu-Gatsheni debunks the ‘mythology’ that he claims surrounds the Ndebele military violence history: “The Ndebele nation is said to have survived by

⁶⁹ Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S. 2006. “The Nativist Revolution and Development Conundrums in Zimbabwe”. *ACCORD Occasional Papers Series*, 1 (4): 1-40.

⁷⁰ Musemwa, M. 2006. “Disciplining a ‘Dissident’ City: Hydropolitics in the City of Bulawayo, Matabeleland, Zimbabwe, 1980-1994”. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 32 (2): 239-254.

⁷¹ The conception of the ‘disciplinary’ power of the dominant social narrative was coined by Michel Foucault in his seminal work: *Power/Knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings, 1972-1977*. Pantheon Books. 1980.

⁷² Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S. 2006. “The Nativist Revolution and Development Conundrums in Zimbabwe”: 3.

plunder, pillage and violent raids upon their neighbours.”⁷³ While Ndlovu-Gatsheni acknowledges the military organisation of the Ndebele nation, he takes pain to show that what was mistakenly interpreted as a highly organised military system was more often connected to civilian structures (e.g. cultural formations by age-groups) primarily existing as units of social production: “... [These] groups performed important civil and community services like building homes, herding cattle and cultivating crops.”⁷⁴

In another work, Ndlovu-Gatsheni⁷⁵ traces the twinning together of the nationalist-military agenda in Zimbabwe. After outlining the theoretical dangers of involving the military in politics, he identifies the forerunners to the birthing of a military-state in independent Zimbabwe. Throughout the war of liberation, the guerrilla armies of ZIPRA and ZANLA regularly utilised coercive force on the peasants, immersed themselves in the doctrines of nationalist ideology and maintained their operational base from within the civilian population.⁷⁶ Pointing to the recent developments of election rigging, fast-track land reform, and the revival of youth militia (referred to as the ‘Green Bombers’), Ndlovu-Gatsheni establishes the primary pillars that buttress the nationalist-military ‘oligarchy’ in Zimbabwe: Ethnic manipulation, material resource perks, political power co-option and ideological indoctrination.⁷⁷ The ‘industrial-military complex’⁷⁸ of Zimbabwe became the structural extension of the voice of the grand political narrative of the ZANU-PF elite and as such it acted as the *constructed mechanism* through which this homogeneous political view of reality was enacted upon the people of the nation.

Another key structural analysis of the Zimbabwean conflict is generated from the implosion of the state as a result of the surfacing of internal oppositional forces. Liisa

⁷³ Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S. 2003. The post-colonial state and Matabeleland: Regional perceptions of civil-military relations, 1980-2002, in Williams, R., Cawthra, G. and Abrahams, D. (Eds.) *Ourselves to Know – Civil-Military Relations and Defence Transformation in Southern Africa*, Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies, 17-38.

⁷⁴ Ibid:18.

⁷⁵ Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S. 2006. “Nationalist-Military Alliance and the Fate of Democracy in Zimbabwe”. *African Journal on Conflict Resolution*, 6 (1): 49-79.

⁷⁶ Ibid: 55.

⁷⁷ Ibid: 75-76.

⁷⁸ Mills, Wright C. 1968. *The Power Elite*. Beacon Press, 5.

Laakso⁷⁹ discusses three distinct periods of political opposition in Zimbabwe. First, ZAPU (Zimbabwe African People's Union), until its amalgamation with ZANU-PF in 1987-8, represented a strong regional opposition that having founded and launched the independence struggle could legitimately challenge the liberation war credentials of the ZANU-PF and its apparent 'right' to rule: "The [ZAPU] party's resistance of intimidation and violence for more than five years, helped foster a climate of political pluralism in the country..."⁸⁰. Second, ZUM (Zimbabwe Unity Movement) arose in 1990 declaring its defiance to the government proposition of a one-party state and touting itself as a safe-guard for multi-party politics and a watch-dog against corruption. Third, the MDC (Movement for Democratic Change) launched in 1999 in direct response to at least four crises in the Nation: a new generation of young people who had lost the liberation memory and who were demanding change, a growing discontent with the leadership of ZANU-PF, a country in economic turmoil, and the masses calling for drastic constitutional reform. Each of these formalised oppositional entities represented the different strands of the *subjugated narratives* of the ordinary citizens of Zimbabwe.

The current regime's intolerance of any form of opposition expressed itself in 2005 with the State-sanctioned 'Operation Murambatsvina' (translated as 'clean out the rubbish' or 'take out the trash'). In this operation approximately 700,000 urban poor were displaced.⁸¹ While the government attempted to entrench a public narrative that revolved around the need to deal with illegal shack dwellers and street vendors, those affected by the forced removals retained a counter-narrative of being politically punished and intimidated for having voted against ZANU-PF in the Presidential election polls. Victor Shale⁸² concurs with this view: "Operation Murambatsvina is therefore widely seen in Zimbabwe and afar as a direct act of retribution against the urban electorate who are known or suspected for having voted against ZANU-PF."⁸³ In sum, as the clandestine

⁷⁹ Laakso, L. 2003. "Opposition Politics in Independent Zimbabwe". *African Studies Quarterly* 7, no. 2&3: Retrieved from the web 2007/11/07. [online] URL: <http://web.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v7/v7i2a6.htm>: 1-16.

⁸⁰ Sibanda, E. 2004. *The Zimbabwe African People's Union, 1961-87 – A Political History of Insurgency in Southern Rhodesia*. New Jersey: Africa World Press, preface ix.

⁸¹ Solidarity Peace Trust. 2005. "Crime of Poverty": Murambatsvina Part II incorporating "Hide and Seek": An account of finding the forcibly displaced in rural Matabeleland, July – September 2005, 5.

⁸² Shale, V. 2006. "Operation Murambatsvina: The Dynamics and Escalation of Zimbabwean Intra-state Conflict". *African Journal on Conflict Resolution*, 6 (2): 107-125

⁸³ Ibid: 120.

narratives of the urban poor became amplified through the electoral process, the State heightened its instrumentalities of violence to forcibly *silence* these contradictory texts.

There remain ironic, paradoxical pockets in Zimbabwe where support for, and opposition to ZANU-PF are in juxtaposition one to another. These include the war veterans (and their agency in the land reform question), the media and various women's movements. Much of the scholarship surrounding the liberation war veterans is aimed at demystifying the nationalist discourse that consciously subverts certain aspects of the historical record and elevates that which is favourable to the ruling party.⁸⁴ While the ZAPU-ZIPRA contribution to the armed struggle has been almost erased from the official ZANU-PF history, Jeremy Brickhill commends the ZIPRA fighting contingent as an army recruited from the proletariat which had so much favour with the peasants that they rarely needed to use force, and which had, by the end of the war, made the successful transition from a guerrilla army to a strategic military force poised to liberate Zimbabwe from Rhodesian rule through conventional warfare.⁸⁵

Central to the successful re-write of Zimbabwean war veterans' experience is to resist the polarising pull of the 'good guys / bad guys' narrative that so easily entices nationalist liberation rhetoric. The plot of the drama of war and the motivations of the chief protagonists must never become monolithic; they must be layered and complex so as to keep at bay the temptation to seek revenge among the generations to come. Teresa Barnes has recorded and transcribed the narrative stories of many Zimbabwean ex-combatants in order to expose the depth of emotions, motivations and actions that drive these soldiers:

"A further complexity is the common historiographical treatment of war. Wars are often summed up as the decisions of leaders and the movements of armies. It is often forgotten that these depend on ordinary soldiers, who make personal sacrifices to achieve advances and victories, and who suffer the consequences of retreats and defeats physically. But their experiences are usually obliterated in the manufacture of histories and may even be lost to popular memory. The result is

⁸⁴ A case in point here is the ZANU-PF 'authorised' account of the liberation struggle by Martin, D. and Johnson, P. 1981. *The Struggle for Zimbabwe*. Johannesburg: Raven Press.

⁸⁵ Bhebe, N. and Ranger, T. (Eds.) (1995). *Soldiers in Zimbabwe's Liberation War*. Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publications, 7-8.

the propagation of an official mythology of war, with heavy emphasis on its abstract and ‘glorious’ aspects.”⁸⁶

Norma Kriger makes a strong case for the opportunistic partnership between the ZANU-PF and the war veterans in two parallel seven year periods of time 1980-87 and 2000-07: “...veterans and the ruling party were both collaborators and antagonists, often simultaneously. Each sought to build power and privilege through mutual manipulation of the other...”⁸⁷ In both time periods mentioned above the regime and the veterans collaborated for mutual gain in several ways: first, power mongering (purging of ZIPRA ex-combatants from National Army, monetary benefits and seizure of land); second, liberation war appeals (forcing legitimacy through divisive rhetoric on hero/dissident soldiers, authentic/fake veterans, and counter-revolutionary accusations); and three, use of violence and intimidation to bring about change (Matabeleland civilian massacres, youth militia threats, abductions, severe torture and killings).⁸⁸

The fast-track land reform programme enacted in the year 2000 is no less nuanced than the war veteran’s world of needs, interests and realities. In a study on the Zimbabwe land issue conducted by Bevlyne Sithole, Bruce Campbell, Dale Dore, and Witness Kozanayi,⁸⁹ peasant narratives on the land are dissected and state-peasant relations are interrogated to provide a stinging indictment of political relations over land. Instead of making the peasants more receptive to the State, this study found that there are so many anomalies in the land redistribution effort (conflicted ownership over familial capital resources, contrary traditional communal practices and disputed processes around subsistence farming) that it has had the opposite effect; rural peasant communities have become increasingly *disengaged* as opposed to engaged with the State. Thus, despite the ZANU-PF’s recent sloganeering and the revived liberation discourse on ‘bringing the

⁸⁶ Barnes, T. 1995. The Heroes’ Struggle: Life after the Liberation War for Four Ex-combatants in Zimbabwe, in Bhebe, N. and Ranger, T. (Eds.) (1995). *Soldiers in Zimbabwe’s Liberation War*. Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publications, 118.

⁸⁷ Kriger, N. 2003. “War Veterans: Continuities between the Past and the Present”. *African Studies Quarterly* 7, no. 2&3: Retrieved from web 2007/11/07. [online]
URL: <http://web.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v7/v7i2a7.htm>: 1-12; 1

⁸⁸ Kriger, 2007: 7.

⁸⁹ Sithole, B., Campbell, B., Dore, D., and Kozanayi, W. 2003. “Narratives on Land: State-Peasant Relations over Fast Track Land Reform in Zimbabwe”. *African Studies Quarterly* 7, no. 2&3: Retrieved from web 2007/11/07. [online] URL: <http://web.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v7/v7i2a4.htm>: 1-14.

revolution full circle by giving land back to the people' the actual measured revolutionary *satisfaction* of the peasant masses appears to be waning.

Another highly contested arena of ZANU-PF support and opposition has been among the women of Zimbabwe. Shereen Essof⁹⁰ highlights the struggle of Zimbabwean women to define an agenda that is universal while at the same time critical of the cultural *and* political patriarchy which so often dominates liberation movements. Essof decries the manner in which feminist thinking in Zimbabwe has been dismissed as 'counter-revolutionary', 'anti-nationalist' and 'pro-imperialist.' Essof outlines the tensions between attempting to develop a unified platform for political issues facing the women of Zimbabwe and the very political agendas and allegiances that each woman has cemented with the ZANU-PF or the opposition as their respective representing party. Three distinct camps and their respective narratives emerged from these conflictive apprehensions within the women's movement of Zimbabwe. First, there are pro-ZANU-PF women who promulgate that the women's agenda must remain 'apolitical' and not entail issues of opposition to the Revolutionary State. Second, there are women who want a relatively safe discourse as a means to critiquing current power promote a women's agenda grounded in standardised, objective international instruments of gender, development and human rights. Third, there are those representing activist leanings who insist that the women's agenda must be critical of all patriarchal power; demanding a holistic, contextual discourse that seeks total transformation of structures and relationships in society regardless of so-called revolutionary credentials or political rank and legitimacy.

Grace Kwinjeh⁹¹ asks whether the current political settlement evolving in Zimbabwe is an 'elite transition or people first?' movement. She questions the popular notion of public processes being described as 'people-centred' when one half of the population, the women, are excluded from these processes. Kwinjeh states it quite categorically: "Women whose conspicuous absence I noted above at the Lancaster house negotiations are now demanding a place at the table as a right and not out of the largess

⁹⁰ Essof, S. 2005. "She-murenga: Challenges, Opportunities and Setbacks of the Women's Movement in Zimbabwe". *Feminist Africa 4: Women Mobilised 4* (August/September): 29-45.

⁹¹ Kwinjeh, G. 2007. "Zimbabwe's Crisis, Civil Society's Responsibility: Robert Mugabe, the memory of colonialism and the real neo-colonial". Address given at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal - Centre for Civil Society, Durban, *A Harold Wolpe Lecture Series*, 23 August 2007: 1-13.

of fellow male comrades or the regional patriarchs”⁹². Furthering her argument, Kwinjeh draws from the voice of Everjoice Win:

“Whatever ‘deal’ is worked out to resolve Zimbabwe’s crisis, women and their rights should be at the centre of it. We want feminists – women who care about the rights of other women and who are prepared to rock the patriarchal boat – to be in leadership positions and to be there when the deal is made. Women want a new and comprehensive Constitution that guarantees their rights. This includes provision which clearly states that customary law and tradition must not violate international human rights, norms and standards. We want to see a complete overhaul of a political system that has seen women reduced to political cheerleaders, or worse, sex workers with few economic prospects and the lowest life expectancy in the world.”⁹³

Hence, when one purviews the women’s literature on Zimbabwe, what emerges is an almost suffocated feminist narrative struggling to find its way to the surface under the clouded, heavy weight of a grand patriarchal narrative entrenched in both the political and cultural systems that dominate Zimbabwean society.

2.2.6. A Critique of the Political-Structural Interpretation

The political-structuralist approach has a tendency to view the collective narratives as the sum total of reality while disregarding the power of personal narratives to affect change in conflict situations. The glorification of collective action gives little room for the phenomena of *serendipity* (surprise factor) that springs from individual acts of transformation in the midst of public structural conflict. The actions of individual players within the system are normally described as resulting from the political loyalty and commitment to a greater ‘cause’ (the revolution), the party or the ‘people’ *en mass*, no matter how displaced those motivations may actually appear.

Narrative discourse analysis provides the explanatory bridge between the individual and the structural question of *agency*. Embedded within social narrative discourse is the interplay and connection between the personal and the corporate agency of social thought and practice. On one hand, powerful individuals search for ways to act out and justify their personal narratives through collective expression and advocacy. On the other hand, collective narratives are buoyed by individuals of influence who give them voice and legitimacy, producing a living reality on its own. Thus, there remains a

⁹² Ibid: 11.

⁹³ Ibid.

continual dance of mutual reinforcement between the private and the public narratives and the domains of power that they inhabit. The life-blood of the national story consists of the sum total of all the individual stories of the citizens that inhabit its boundaries and the nucleus of social change lies precisely in the synergetic, collaborative vision of both the singular and the plural narratives merging into a unified action.

2.2.7. Historical-Ideological Interpretations

The historical-ideological analysis is not so much preoccupied with the content of a good personal story or the in-depth description of political structures as it is interested in *why* a story is told or a structure is created to begin with, who presents the story or built the structure in question, and for what motives was the story recounted or the structure developed? In her captivating book on the assassination of Herbert Chitepo, Luise White articulates this narrative approach to history:

“This book charts a different course of interrogation altogether. I’m in pursuit of history, of how narratives about the past are produced and reproduced by these narratives. I’m interested in the many confessions, why some fail and why others surface when they do. My question then is not who did it, but why do so many insist they did it... Texts compete by claiming (and proclaiming) their truth. Looking at how texts compete, at what they compete over, and what is at stake in their competition, is a way to articulate the relationships between them.”⁹⁴

Historiography then becomes an undertaking of discovering *how* and *why* narrative discourse is ‘massaged’ and managed so as to carefully erect a politico-ideological reality. Terence Ranger expounds on this practice with precision and eloquence in his writings on rise of ‘Patriotic History’ in Zimbabwe. Ranger takes precautions to extrapolate the distinctions between nationalist historiography (documenting the rise and chronicling the life-progression of nationalist movements), histories *of* nationalism (illuminating an interpretive turn or the critical dissection of nationalist movements) and patriotic history, defined for Zimbabwe as follows:

“Patriotic history is intended to proclaim the continuity of the Zimbabwean revolutionary tradition. It is an attempt to reach out to ‘youth’ over the heads of their parents and teachers, all of who are said to have forgotten or betrayed revolutionary values. It repudiates academic historiography with its attempts to complicate and question. At the same time it confronts Western ‘bogus

⁹⁴ White, L. 2003. *The Assassination of Herbert Chitepo: Texts and Politics in Zimbabwe*. Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2-3.

universalism' which it depicts as a denial of the concrete history of global oppression."⁹⁵

Ranger describes how this 'patriotic history' is diffused throughout Zimbabwean society by the strident and consistent use (or abuse) of the visual and print media, educational institutions at all levels, the performance sector and almost all other forums of public space in which a particular political mono-narrative can be promoted. This multi-faceted and comprehensive strategy for dissemination of 'patriotic history' has resulted in what Ranger characterises as: "...a coherent but complex doctrine."⁹⁶

The media as a conduit for ideological propagation has remained a bastion of political contention since the inception of independent Zimbabwe. Being fully aware of the tremendous influence the media wields as the narrative voice of a nation, the ZANU-PF has exerted a magnitude of pressure, control and repression over the media which has lent itself to a tumultuous relationship between the ruling party, the state-run media and the 'free' independent press. Revolutionary strength has required a mastery of the national narrative through the machinations of re-education, indoctrination and the consistent barrage of 'tailor-made' affirmative images of the state through the media. Stanford Mukasa, quoting Noam Chomsky has called this state-sanctioned media message blitzing the creation of "necessary illusions"⁹⁷. "Ultimately the press in Zimbabwe falls victim to being a propaganda machinery in the creation of necessary illusions necessary because ruling party elites need to create such illusions in order to stay in power."⁹⁸

In a contrasting study on the press in Zimbabwe, N. Mathema⁹⁹ argues for a balance in news reporting so as to counter the perceived or actual bias of Western countries that currently dominates the international media. Mathema attempts to measure the partiality of Zimbabwean newspapers by contrasting ten topics that clearly emanate from a socialist ideation with the international news articles that appeared in the national newspapers over a designated period of time. In the end, while seeming to prove an

⁹⁵ Ranger, T. 2003. "Nationalist Historiography, Patriotic History and the History of the Nation: the struggle over the past in Zimbabwe". *Journal for Southern African Studies* 30 (2), 1.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Mukasa, S. 2003. "Press and Politics in Zimbabwe". *African Studies Quarterly* 7, no.1&2: Retrieved from the web 2007/11/07. [online] ULR: <http://web.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v7/v7i2a9.htm>: 1-11.

⁹⁸ Ibid: 9.

⁹⁹ Mathema, N. 2001. *Newspapers in Zimbabwe*. Lusaka, Zambia: Multimedia Publications.

imbalance in international news reporting (in favour of Western media partiality) in Zimbabwe, the article seems to be more captivated with promoting a socialist agenda rather than exploring the competitive clash of world-view narratives on the geo-political media landscape.

Jocelyn Alexander and JoAnn McGregor¹⁰⁰ expose an intriguing phenomenon in which narrative discourse is transmitted inter-generationally in such a way that the current generation has internalised the particular narrative passed on to them as if it was their own. The authors followed the media internet debate that erupted in 1997 after the release of 'Breaking the Silence'¹⁰¹ a detailed report on the Gukurahundi massacres. Most of the internet users researched were youth who would not have experienced or participated in the Gukurahundi violence and many were self-proclaimed future leaders. Of interest was the degree in which those who were supporters of ZANU-PF confidently defended the 'genocidal' tactics of the government in Matabeleland as necessary for the security of the country. In many instances, the debaters subscribed almost verbatim to the official narratives of justification propagated by the ZANU-PF to explain the violence unleashed on the civilian population of Matabeleland. Beyond this, these young defenders of the revolution even elicited historical ethnic grievances of Ndebele raids against Shona peoples that occurred over one hundred years ago, inferring that the Matabeleland killings were a form of excusable if not permissible revenge. What was clear is that these non-Ndebele youth had so thoroughly imbibed the historical-political narrative of the ZANU-PF that they now internalised that script as the only reality: "...[these] debates demonstrated that discussion was only as free as the political views of the participants allowed, and showed the lasting and profound influence of the interpretations of the violence propagated in Zimbabwe's media during the conflict."¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Alexander, J. and McGregor, J. 1999. Representing Violence in Matabeleland, Zimbabwe: Press and Internet Debates, in Allen T. and Seaton, J. (Eds.) *The Media of Conflict: War Reporting and Representations of Ethnic Violence*, London and New York: Zed Books.

¹⁰¹ Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace and Legal Resources Foundation. 1997. *Breaking the Silence, Building True Peace: A Report on the Disturbances in Matabeleland and the Midlands 1980-1988*. Harare: CCJP / LRF. This publication is hailed to be the most careful and objective compilation of research data, analysis and statistical findings verifying the Gukurahundi violence and its grave consequences. This report was based on over 2,000 direct victim's statements and other primary source documents. It is believed that up to 20,000 people were massacred in Matabeleland and the Midlands between 1980-1988.

¹⁰² Alexander and McGregor, 1999: 262.

Thus, in a highly contested historical environment, ‘patriotic history’ can take its defining place as the mediator of authenticity and in so doing it is able to rationalise and protract many forms of oppression, violent repression and the neglect of basic human needs and freedoms.

2.2.8. A Critique of the Historical-Ideological Interpretation

The historical-ideological interpretation takes its investigation backstage to the internal socio-political scaffolding (the *how* and *why*) of the personal-relational (the *who*) and the political-structural (the *what*) frameworks; answering questions of their existence, nature and functioning. However, while this deeper analysis uncovers new layers of intrigue about the expressions of conflict and violence, it often fails to *predict* the kind of legacies (either individual or corporate) that are likely to be part of the future consequences of certain decisions, words or actions taken in the now. Narrative discourse analysis, with its emphatic thrust on the ‘construction of reality’, fills in this predictive gap. Narrative discourse analysis not only produces alternative explanations of the immediate situation but it also *predicts* how those explanations may translate into future scenarios of reality and the necessary relationships and systems that may need to be created in order avoid or to prolong them.

2.3. Section Two: Discourse - Narrative Construction of Preferred Realities¹⁰³

Narratology (the study of narrative), does not fit neatly into any particular academic discipline and is by nature a multidisciplinary pursuit. Narrative as a domain of theory and practice is primarily concerned with what might be termed ‘interpretative meaning’,¹⁰⁴. With the rise of globalisation, it is becoming increasingly apparent that our world is constructed as much from symbolic exchanges as from material transactions.¹⁰⁵ Discourse analysis becomes one of the most effective tools for unearthing the meaning of these symbolic exchanges.

Discourse analysis sees every textual statement as embedded in a broader conversational backdrop. To demystify and unpack the language of violence, it becomes essential that every textual statement is analysed at two levels. First, one needs to ask

¹⁰³ This term ‘social construction’ was first coined by: Berger, P. & Luckmann, T. 1966. *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. Garden City, New York: Anchor Books.

¹⁰⁴ Geertz, C. 1973. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books.

¹⁰⁵ Richards, 1996: xxiii.

who are the social groups or organisations that are substantiating the conversation of violence and to then examine the particular contexts that validate this narration of violence. Understanding this interplay between the actual script and the social interaction that couches it is crucial to the deconstruction of the violence narrative. Richards states it clearly: “Understanding war as text and discourse is not an intellectual affection, but a vital necessity, because only when ‘war talk’ is fully comprehended is it possible for conciliators to outline other more pacific options in softer tones”¹⁰⁶.

In its broadest sense, the concepts and uses of narrative have been an integral part of our human experience since before recorded history. Age-old oral traditions of story, wisdom-sayings, proverbs, parable, poetry and drama have functioned to affirm and validate social configurations of human relationship for centuries. The pivotal role of oral tradition in the transmission and preservation of history, worldview, culture and religious values and practices among ancient pre-literate civilisations is well researched and documented.

According to Jean-Francois Lyotard, narrative was the knowledge base of pre-modern societies. Lyotard conjectured that narrative was considered knowledge in these ancient clan or tribal formations, not because it represented ‘facts’ but because it established and propagated social norms and structures, the rules of life that functioned as the glue to hold groups of people together in social cohesion. Thus, stories in and of themselves and the story-tellers alike, upheld a great authority as long as these ‘traditions’ were defended in everyday living.¹⁰⁷

During the Enlightenment, dominated by the rise of the scientific revolution, narrative took the form of what have been termed, ‘meta-narratives’, self-contained structures of thought and values that set the boundaries and gave explanation to the natural and supernatural phenomena of the day and served to normalise and provide necessary understanding of the dominate and prevailing belief systems. Whether in the literary arts (such as the novel) or in historical annals, these overarching meta-narratives were the prevailing discourse up until the 1950s. Lyotard¹⁰⁸ claims that the modern

¹⁰⁶ Ibid: xxiv.

¹⁰⁷ Lyotard, J. 1984. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

scientific establishment, which so often disdained socio-religious narratives as fable or myth, in fact relied on meta-narratives to provide the necessary coherence to keep science as the foundational basis of all knowledge. While many of the socio-religious meta-narratives of the past are now being methodically de-constructed, for individuals as well as whole societies, these remain a strong magnetic force around which to organise views of the world.

Journalist Robert Fulford in his lively and entertaining discussion of *Nostalgia, Knighthood, and the Circle of Dreams*¹⁰⁹, skilfully outlines the way in which many of the novels that were popular in the southern states of America (specifically Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*) provided that society with the necessary framework to justify their struggle to valiantly preserve their meta-narrative of status quo religious, political and socio-economic systems of pre-civil war 'order'.¹¹⁰

More recently, narrative approaches have become a central organising factor around which many of the human sciences are now configured in theory, critical analysis and application. Since 1960, the study of narrative has gained great momentum in two ways: it has become an international subject of intense interrogation, and it has been established as a vital field of thought and action that spans across an interdisciplinary landscape.¹¹¹ This contemporary re-birthing of the narrative approach spawned out of the disciplines of linguistics, mythology, literary criticism, new historicism and recent practice forms such as in therapy, mediation and ritual. This section will extrapolate on these above-mentioned disciplines and specifically on their intersection with narratology.

2.3.1. Linguistics

F. de Saussure argues for the *meaning*, not just the *function*, of linguistics. He gives descriptive depth to the system of linguistics by developing the notions of synchronic identity (how words form and define who we are), synchronic reality (how words are understood in the context from which they are spoken), and synchronic value (how words are given meaning within the relational transaction). Saussure emphasizes the importance of understanding language as defined by the values attached to it.

¹⁰⁹ Fulford, R. 1999. *The Triumph of Narrative – Storytelling in the Age of Mass Culture* (Chapter 5). New York: Broadway Books.

¹¹⁰ Ibid: 130-135.

¹¹¹ Wallace M. 1986. *Recent Theories of Narrative*. Ithica & London: Cornell University Press.

Linguistics is much more than the stringing together of specific letters and sounds; it only comes to life when units of value (meaning) are accredited to the different sounds and patterns of language.¹¹²

Language serves as the intermediary between two chaotic masses of thought (ideas) and sound (phonetics). Thoughts remain hidden until given sound, and sounds remain arbitrary until connected to thought. Sound alone does not relay value until it is associated with meaning. Saussure methodically differentiates between ‘signification’ (ideas, concepts and meaning), and ‘signal’ (sound and word utterance). When signification and signal are combined, the result is a ‘*sign*’ which encompasses the *phonetics* and the *value* of the words intertwined together. *Sign* is the basic unit of all meaningful communication and when multiple signs are linked together, complex narrative results.

For language to become a meaningful linguistic system, it requires the introduction of social values which emanate from human community.¹¹³ Of interest here is how linguistic value is determined. Saussure suggests that the formation of values is governed by a two paradoxical principles. First, the value of an object is assigned according to its dissimilarity from other objects, (e.g. a coin is dissimilar to the items it can purchase). Second, value is also relegated to an object in comparison to other similar objects, (e.g. coins are compared amongst themselves within a given monetary system with each one given different value).¹¹⁴ Accordingly, Don Cupitt writes on the power of story narrative as embedded in its use of *metaphors* (comparison and contrast of the similar and dissimilar), which is a basic form of intelligence.¹¹⁵

This ironic value comparison between that which is both dissimilar and that which is similar is at the core of ethno-cultural conflict theory that states that our social values and our identity formation are developed and refined in comparison to those who are different from us (often termed ‘the other’). This kind of identity competition is natural and need not be harmful. However, it can lay the necessary foundation for what has been termed ‘enemy formation’ in conflict theorisation.

¹¹² De Saussure, F. 1954. *Course in General Linguistics*. Oxford, England: Duckworth Publishers, 106-109.

¹¹³ Saussure, 1954: 111-112.

¹¹⁴ Ibid: 113.

¹¹⁵ Cupitt, 1991: 14-15.

However, this comparative identity construction is not only reserved for people who are geographically and/or culturally far away from us (those who are dissimilar); this same process feeds the genocide violence between close-knit people groups who may have co-existed for many centuries. For various reasons (historical traumas, revenge cycles, power struggles or protracted structural oppression) these inter-connected groups are now determined to divide and separate from each other. This kind of violent social ‘divorce’ is peculiarly disturbing because many of these groups that are fighting for self-determination share the same genetic, cultural and language heritage. The psycho-social theory in this matter rests on the central theme of *similarity*, not dissimilarity.

Michael Ignatieff appropriately extrapolates on this notion in his writing on ‘the Narcissism of Minor Difference’ a term he borrows from Sigmund Freud.¹¹⁶ Ignatieff substantiates that this kind of violent conflict can arise from a desperate attempt by two people groups to set themselves apart from each other. Division allows the antagonists a chance to dissociate from each other and the interdependencies that exist between them. This violent effort to extricate one group from the other is driven by the need to prove their essentialist, unique identities; their extreme differences in protest to the homogenization of their historical past. However, to do this ‘successfully’ they have to exaggerate and magnify their minor differences. In Matabeleland, the Gukurahundi violence exasperated the minor ethnic and political grievances that did exist between Ndebele/Shona and ZAPU/ZANU to such extremes that Ndebele extremists are now calling for secession from Zimbabwe and the ZANU-PF stronghold of Mashonaland.

2.3.2. Mythology

As the nervous system plays an intermediary role between the human mind and experience, so myth according to Claude Levi-Strauss¹¹⁷ plays an analogous role in mediating between the human realities of reason and intuition. “This whole problem of experience versus mind seems to have solution in the structure of the nervous system, not in the structure of the mind or in experience, but somewhere between mind and

¹¹⁶ Ignatieff, M. 1998. *The Warrior’s Honour – Ethnic War and the Modern Conscience*. New York: Viking Publishers, 48.

¹¹⁷ Levi-Strauss, C. 1979. *Myth and Meaning*. New York: Schocken, 3.

experience in the way our nervous system is built and in the way it mediates between mind and experience.”¹¹⁸

Levi-Strauss maintains that science has only two paths to follow in its efforts to gain knowledge of the world, reductionist or structuralist. To Levi-Strauss, reductionism occurs when very complex phenomena on one level can be reduced to simpler phenomena on other levels. Structuralism occurs when phenomena are too complex to be reduced to a lower order and can only be approached by looking to their relationships, that is, by trying to understand what kind of original system they make-up.¹¹⁹ In sum, the ‘structuralists’ are “...trying to find an order behind what is given to us as a disorder¹²⁰”.

What mesmerized Levi-Strauss and catapulted his work into the centre of rigorous debate was his notion of the universal themes and patterns (“mythemes” as Levi-Strauss termed them)¹²¹ arising from his comparative research of myths among many people groups across the world. Levi-Strauss justified the existence of these universal myths as follows: “So, if the same absurdity was found to reappear over and over again, and another kind of absurdity also to reappear, then this was something which was not absolutely absurd; otherwise it would not appear¹²²”. Levi-Strauss came to the conclusion that there was an overarching structure to human myth, a kind of systemization that provided the centrifugal pull to hold the great diversity of myths together: “The common denominator is always to introduce some kind of order. If this represents a basic need for order in the human mind and since, after all, the human mind is only part of the universe, the need probably exists because there is some order in the universe and the universe is not a chaos”¹²³.

The ‘structuralist’ framework remains a definitive means by which to understand the culture of human violence. Major influence in this regards came from works by

¹¹⁸ Ibid: 8.

¹¹⁹ Ibid: 9-10.

¹²⁰ Ibid: 11.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid: 12-13. For related cross-disciplinary work on ‘chaos management theory’ see: Wheatley, M. 1994. *Leadership and the New Science – Learning about Organisation from an Orderly Universe*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers Inc., and Stacey, R. 1992. *Managing the Unknowable – Strategic Boundaries between Order and Chaos in Organisations*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers. Borrowing from natural sciences, these theories have confirmed that behind all natural chaos are highly intricate systems and patterns of order. This principle has been successfully translated into the human sciences to shed new light on the processes of managing organizational (collective or group) conflicts.

French structuralist, Rene Girard¹²⁴. In his study of human sacrificial systems, Girard builds a strong and complex case for the centrality of sacrifice through violence (often referred to as ‘scape-goating’) as foundational for the very existence of human cultures. Not only is this sacrificial violence privileged in the *formational* scripts of human organization but it is the under-girding script that *sustains* collective identity and unity among people groups or nations.¹²⁵

Another example of trying to code the universal myth of human violence comes in the more contemporary writing of feminist journalist and biologist, Barbara Ehrenreich¹²⁶. Carefully weaving together the past with the present, the profane with the sacred, and the roots of predation with modern day war, Ehrenreich skilfully unravels the mythical script of violence that has become core to human civilization. This acting out of the violence myth manifests most obviously in forms of domestic violence, gangsters or organized war, but it is also appears in more subtle ways that are reinforced in the collective psyche of society through religious dogma, media, national sports and gender role socialization.

These matters are also the central thrust of renowned feminist author and anthropologist, Riane Eisler¹²⁷. Contrary to the dominant myths of instinctual human violence, Eisler argues that humankind at its origins is a peace-loving species. She documents ancient configurations of social existence and concludes that they consisted of apparently peaceful groupings of vegetarian “gatherers” (as opposed to carnivorous “hunters”) living in harmony with the environment, the two genders, and among differing tribes. The contemporary dominance of violence is a result of eons of human socialization. Eisler maintains that we are now at an evolutionary crossroads of two alternatives;¹²⁸ we can act out the present myth of increasing chaos and violence or forge a new one of transformation toward a “partnership future”.¹²⁹ Likewise, pioneer peace

¹²⁴ Girard, R. 1972. *Violence and the Sacred*, (Translated by Patrick Gregory). Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press. See related work by Bailie, G. 1997. *Violence Unveiled: Humanity at a Crossroads*. New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company.

¹²⁵ Girard, 1972: 299-300.

¹²⁶ Ehrenreich, B. 1997. *Blood Rites – Origins and History of the Passions of War*. New York: Metropolitan Books – Henry Holt and Company.

¹²⁷ Eisler, R. 1987. *The Chalice and the Blade – Out History, Our Future*. New York, New York: HarperCollins Publishers.

¹²⁸ Ibid: xiii.

¹²⁹ Ibid: 185-205.

activist and academic Elise Boulding¹³⁰ claimed that the most significant current research in the peace-building field was “the recognition that negotiation and conflict resolution are ubiquitous processes, going on all the time in daily life. This is the peace that already exists: the peace of the negotiated social order”¹³¹. Ehrenreich, Eisler, and Boulding’s findings highlight the power of dominating myths (in this case the myth of violence) and how these can permeate the narratives by which whole societies may end up living.¹³² However, all three of these authors substantively agree this it is not only plausible but necessary to embrace the construction of alternative mythical-realities of peaceful co-existence.

Coming to the function of myth, Levi-Strauss argues that myth does not give humankind a material power over the environment. However, it does give humankind the illusion that they can, and do understand the universe.¹³³ Mary Midgley purports that “far from being the opposite of science, myth is a central part of it. Myth is neither lies nor mere stories but a network of powerful symbols that suggest particular ways of interpreting the world.”¹³⁴ Jayne Docherty, in her fascinating study on the violent stand-off between the US government forces and the Branch Davidians religious cult in Waco, Texas, coins the term “world-making stories” to describe the ordering myths that govern the narratives of communities.¹³⁵ In conflict, their stories become the central organising script that assists disputing parties to *name* the conflict, ascribe *blame* for the conflict-causing breach and *frame* appropriate or inappropriate responses.¹³⁶ World-making discourse becomes sacred as it stakes claims about ultimate truth and authority. When worldviews collide, Docherty suggests that the solution does not lie in engaging in ‘issue-

¹³⁰ Boulding, E. 1987. Learning Peace in Vayrynen, R. (Ed) *The Quest for Peace – Transcending Collective Violence and War among Societies, Cultures, and States*, International Social Science Council, Beverly Hills-Newbury Park-New Delhi: Sage Publications, 317-325.

¹³¹ Ibid: 333.

¹³² Other interesting pieces of research that challenges the essentialist view of human aggression are: De Waal, F. 1989. *Peacemaking among Primates*. Cambridge & London: Harvard University Press; and Grossman, D. Lt. Col. 1995. *On Killing – The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society*. Boston & New York: Back Bay Books.

¹³³ Levi-Strauss, 1979: 17.

¹³⁴ Higham, D. 2005. *David Higham Associates*. Retrieved from the web 14/07/2005.
http://www.davidhigham.co.uk/html/Titles/The_myths_we_live_by

¹³⁵ Docherty, J. 2001. *Learning Lessons from Waco – When the Parties bring God to the Negotiation Table*. New York: Syracuse University Press, 62.

¹³⁶ Ibid: 58-61.

specific' negotiations but in actually negotiating reality, truth and authority.¹³⁷ The dilemma is *not* how to reconcile parties to one real world, but instead, how to “manage, negotiate, or navigate through multiple worlds”¹³⁸.

In explaining the bridge between narrative discourse and its translation into social reality, Levi-Strauss¹³⁹ draws a clear line between the ‘preconscious’ and the ‘unconscious’ states of being. The preconscious is “as a reservoir of recollections and images amassed in the course of a lifetime”¹⁴⁰. This is where the patterns and pathways of universal human myth reside. The unconscious is merely the container or framing that “imposes structural laws upon inarticulated elements which originate elsewhere – impulses, emotions, representations and memories”¹⁴¹. He then describes the relationship between pre and unconscious states as such: “We might say, therefore, that the *preconscious* is the individual lexicon where each of us accumulates the vocabulary of his personal history, but that this vocabulary becomes significant, for us and others, only to the extent that the *unconscious* structures it according to its laws and thus transforms it into language”¹⁴². The unconscious once it emerges as the *conscious* becomes the conduit for the myth to become an articulated and acted upon reality. The Matabeleland massacres were the result of ZANU-PF embracing certain chosen myths and then consciously embarking on a campaign to conspicuously articulate and act upon these chosen myths, despite their devastating reality.

2.3.3. Literary Criticism

Literary criticism as a discipline, although initially applied to the written text alone, is the parent to contemporary forms of narrative discourse analysis (frames and methods) being described in this study and generally utilised in social research. Narrative critic and author, Mark Allan Powell,¹⁴³ suggests that literary criticism (as opposed to historical criticism) primarily concerns itself with the completed written text, emphasises the unity of the text as a whole, views the text as an end in itself, and is based on

¹³⁷ Ibid: 53-55.

¹³⁸ Ibid: 52.

¹³⁹ Levi-Strauss, C. 1958. *Structural Anthropology*, (Translated from French by Claire Jacobson and Brooke Grundfest Schoepf). Penguin Books.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid: 203.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Powell, M. 1990. *What is Narrative Criticism?* Minneapolis: Fortress Press.

communication models of speech-act theory.¹⁴⁴ Powell proposes that there are four types of literary criticism: expressive (author-centred); pragmatic (reader-centred); objective (text-centred); and mimetic (centred on the evaluation of truth and accuracy in representation).¹⁴⁵

Out of these four foci have emerged various schools of thought around how to best approach the process of literary criticism. *Literary structuralism* (1950-1960s), explores the *meaning* of narrative in the deep and multi-layered, often hidden, scaffolding of the text rather than the intentions of the author or the interpretations of the reader. *Rhetorical analysis* surfaces *how* the literature achieves a particular effect on the reader. Does the narrative educate, entertain or transform (change) the reader? *Reader-response criticism* unpacks the role of the reader in determining the meaning of any given text. Is the reader *over* the text, *with* the text, or *in* the text?¹⁴⁶

Literary criticism is concerned with unearthing meaning in narrative discourse and the literature text by concentrating on the: *plots / events* (unfolds in order, duration, frequency, causation and conflict); *characters* (revealed through description or revelation, point of view and traits); *settings* (representing the spatial, temporal, and social environments in question); *symbolism and irony* (categorised as universal, historical, contextual, or cultural); and *narrative patterns* (the notion that deep meaning resides in the structural composition).¹⁴⁷

Powell differentiates between ‘story’ and ‘discourse’. *Story* is the content of the narrative; *what* the text is about. *Discourse* is the rhetoric of the narrative; *how* the story is told.¹⁴⁸ Of course, a large part of discourse analysis also involves the study of language. It would be improper not to mention a number of overlapping areas between language theory and literary criticism. Michael Forrester¹⁴⁹ posits how language is a multidisciplinary field of study and positions his discussion about language in the context of meaning. Forrester works with five approaches to *indirect meaning*: meaning as reference; meaning as logical form; meaning as context and use; meaning as conceptual

¹⁴⁴ Ibid: 7-8.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid: 11.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid: 12-16.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid: 29-33.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid: 23.

¹⁴⁹ Forrester, M. 1996. *Psychology of Language – A Critical Introduction*, London / New Delhi: Sage Publications.

structure; and meaning as culture.¹⁵⁰ These approaches to literary criticism then become essential to the narrative research methodology utilised in this study (see Chapter Three).

2.3.4. New Historicism

A fourth narrative approach is that which has been termed “*new historicism*.” A leading voice in new historicism, H. Aram Vesser describes the movement this way: “New historicists have evolved a method of describing culture in action...eschew[ing] overarching hypothetical constructs in favour of surprising coincidences.”¹⁵¹ Elizabeth Fox-Genovese proposes an alternative to conventional historicism which she calls, “structural” historicism meaning that “history must disclose and reconstruct the conditions [understood as systems of social relations] of consciousness and action.”¹⁵²

Steeped in the post-modern experience of continuous suspicion and protest against the dominant social understandings and institutions, new historicists have taken on the self-appointed mission of re-writing or at least re-interpreting recorded history as we know it. These post-modern prophets have refused to accept a version of history that for them smacks of grand conspiracy from a unitary voice (white), gender (male), religion (Christian) and cultural (Western) standpoint. New historicists are highly sceptical of what has been termed, “objective” history; both in content and form. For the new historicist, history in its current form (analogue of events) is the scandalous offspring of a small group of the intellectual rich and powerful who dominate the religious, political and socio-economic spheres of the day.

The work of the new historicist is both that of de-construction and re-construction. They are first and foremost determined to deconstruct the dominant, elitist discourse of the bourgeois who have manipulated the representation of history for generations. Benedict Anderson, renowned for his deconstructive historical writing on nationalism and identity, captivates the reader by his expose of the instrumentalities of colonial power: “These three institutions...the census, the map, and the museum: together, they profoundly shaped the way in which the colonial state imagined its

¹⁵⁰ Ibid: 42.

¹⁵¹ Veesser, H. A. (Ed). 1989. *The New Historicism*, New York / London: Routledge, xi-xii.

¹⁵² Fox-Genovese, E. 1989. “Literary Criticism and the Politics of the New Historicism” in Veesser, H. A., (Ed.) *The New Historicism*. New York / London: Routledge, 217.

dominion – the nature of the human beings it ruled, the geography of its domain, and the legitimacy of its ancestry”¹⁵³.

After de-constructing, the new historicist re-builds on the platform of a new alternative story of history; one that advocates for justice, empowerment, tolerance and social change. It is a story that gives ‘voice’ to the poor, the marginalized, the socially outcast and the masses of people who represent, and daily live out, what Michel Foucault termed, “subjugated knowledges”¹⁵⁴. Foucault believed there were two kinds of *subjugated knowledge*, that which had been recorded and given credence, but then was later erased from view in great ‘historical revisionist projects’ that insisted on maintaining a unified, global knowledge system. The second kind of subjugated knowledge is that of the specifically contextualised or indigenous brand that is constantly being acted out in local communities everywhere. Foucault was consumed with the idea that unless these subjugated knowledges are surfaced, the dominant discourses of history, religion, and current socio-political vantage points will never be dismantled.¹⁵⁵

Abebe Zegeye¹⁵⁶ of the University of South Africa, in writing on the identity of the Beta Israel (often referred to as the ‘Lost Tribe of Israel’), focuses on the narrator voice, or the one who speaks for history. Not only is it important to know who speaks and where they are situated in the context of the content of the history they claim to represent but, “it also involves identifying and critiquing the ideological motives of those historians whose version / imagery of the history...get[s] produced, legitimized or delegitimized and circulated for public consumption”¹⁵⁷. Keeping with the theme of representation, Zegeye goes on to say, “...historians are in fact selecting, re-arranging and ordering facts that come to pass as valid but not incontestable sources of identity”¹⁵⁸.

Richard Hughes writes about a dialogue between those he terms the “historical mythmakers” and those who represent the “dissenting voices” regarding the narratives

¹⁵³ Anderson, B. 1991. *Imagined Communities*. London and New York: Verso Publishing, 163-4.

¹⁵⁴ Foucault, M. 1980. *Power/Knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings*, New York: Pantheon Books.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid: 82.

¹⁵⁶ Zegeye, A. 2004. The Construction of the Beta Israel Identity. *Social Identities*, Vol. 10, No. 5, pp. 589-618. Retrieved from web on 12/11/08.

<http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/routledg/csid/2004/00000010/00000005/art00004>

¹⁵⁷ Ibid: 1.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

that form the self-perception of a given nation. In a similar vein to Foucault's definition of "subjugated voices", Hughes suggests that a nation will only be able to "recapture the nobler ideals" if it is willing to look at its historic myths through the "eyes of its most potent critics."¹⁵⁹ Thus, like Hughes this study will argue that the most legitimate historical account for Zimbabwe is one that consists of a broad range of micro-narratives; local, contextual voices from Matabeleland as well as other regions who each bring a different perspective of experience to the common "mythico-histories"¹⁶⁰ they may share as a nation.

2.3.5. Therapy, Mediation and Ritual Practice

The practice of narrative is about its application to everyday existence in what popular narrative terminology refers to as the '*social construction of preferred realities.*' New applications of narrative practice continue to multiply, putting into action the production of a narrative world (lived experience). Jacques Derrida¹⁶¹, one of the leading post-structuralists, surmises that all of what we call reality is nothing more than a fragile and loosely-attached set of linguistic and symbolic constructions. Three related practice areas that have emerged in the past decade are: narrative therapy; narrative mediation; and use of ritual and symbol in peace-building.

Michael White and co-author David Epston, in their pioneering book on *narrative therapy*¹⁶² describe their work as follows:

"...we make the general assumption that persons experience problems, for which they frequently seek therapy, when the narratives in which they are 'storying' their experience, and/or in which they are having their experiences 'storied' by others, do not sufficiently represent their lived experience, and that, in those circumstances there will be significant aspects of their lived experience that contradict these dominant narratives"¹⁶³.

¹⁵⁹ Hughes, R.T. 2004. *Myths America Lives By*. University of Illinois Press.

¹⁶⁰ This term was introduced by: Malkki, L. 1995. *Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory, and National Cosmology among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

¹⁶¹ Derrida, J. 1976. *Of Grammatology*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.

¹⁶² White, M. & Epston, D. 1990. *Narrative Means to Therapeutic Ends*. New York/London: W.W. Norton & Company; Freedman, J. & Combs, G. 1996. *Narrative Therapy – The Social Construction of Preferred Realities*. New York/London: W.W. Norton & Company.

¹⁶³ Ibid: 14.

Key to their understanding of creative alternatives to the current problematic narratives that people seek help for is the concept of “lived experience”¹⁶⁴. This idea, that each of us as individuals has a great deal of stored up ‘lived experience’ that has never been acknowledged or given a narrative space in our existence, opens up uncharted terrain in which to explore the formation of new life-story discourses.

Another significant narrative practice to emerge more recently is the process of narrative mediation. Leading the way in this arena are John Winslade and Gerald Monk¹⁶⁵, who present a model for conflict mediation using narrative approaches and instrumentality. The salient ‘sign-posts’ on this mediation pathway are: dealing with dominant discourse; discovering alternative discourses; negotiating domains of engagement; deconstruction of conflict-saturated story; and constructing the alternative story.¹⁶⁶

Lastly, there has been recent research forged on the notion of *narrative as ritual and symbol*. Lisa Schirch¹⁶⁷ gives voice to the profound place of ritual and symbol in the processes of peace-building: “[Her work]...underscores the importance of incorporating symbolic tools, including ritual, into traditional approaches to conflict. Ritual assists in solving complex, deep-rooted conflicts, and helps to confirm and transform worldviews, identities and relationships...that what truly bonds adversaries and helps achieve peace are the symbolic, non-verbal ritual acts...yet these are often overlooked as deliberate components of peace negotiations”¹⁶⁸. In its systematic silencing of the subjugated voices of the Matabeleland massacres, the ZANU-PF has in essence suspended all efforts to open up the public space for corporate conflict transformation to be satisfied through therapeutic processes, mediation interventions or the innovative use of ritual and symbol as avenues of genuine justice and healing.

2.4. Section Three: Performance - Narrative as Dramaturgical Theatre

Performance theory infers that acts of violence are like a theatre production: a symbolic and public expression of deep-seated need and a drive to make a statement for

¹⁶⁴ Ibid: 15.

¹⁶⁵ Winslade, J. & Monk, G. 2001. *Narrative Mediation – A New Approach to Conflict Resolution*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid: 57-94.

¹⁶⁷ Schirch, L. 2005. *Ritual and Symbol in Peacebuilding*. Bloomfield, Connecticut: Kumarian Press Inc.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid: Back cover.

‘real-time’ recognition from those who are watching (the audience). Performance theory has its foundations in the science of stage management for large scale dramatic events or significant popular happenings (acts). When applying performance theory to conflict, the primary concern revolves around the production of power through the careful orchestration of violence as an expressive and generative resource.¹⁶⁹ Belinda Bozzoli in her work around theatricality and social conflict phenomena in the South African township of Alexandra, describes this phenomena as follows:

“The rebels in Alexandra used the spaces available to them by treating them as social and political ‘theatres’, places within which the varying dramas they sought to mount could be enacted and thus become the means to claiming greater power. This was a vital ingredient of the revolt, which involved not one ‘drama’ but several. These dramas acted as devices to magnify the revolt and thus to enlarge its claims upon the polity.”¹⁷⁰

According to Bozzoli, applying the conceptions of dramaturgical theatre to large social movements allows the social scientist the freedom and flexibility to move beyond the mechanics of political movements, their formations, ideologies and structural resources to the issue of power; its growth, development and influence over social transformation.¹⁷¹ In this section, three primary frames of conflict theory will be explored in relation to narrative discourse: conceptions of conflict memory; intersections of temporal and spatial dimensions of conflict; and conflict as political theatre of struggle.

2.4.1. Narrative and Conceptions of Conflict Memory

Central to history and the analysis of narrative discourse from a dramatic angle is the dynamic of conflict memory. John Paul Lederach,¹⁷² one of the founding voices in the peace-building field, describes at least four layers of ‘nested’ conflict memory that constitute what it means to recall the past. All accounts of history carry with them deep pulses of *narrative discourse*, which he defines as the unspoken, value-laden meaning (world-view) that is ascribed to the social text (either written or spoken) by each different author, reader or actor often even sub-consciously. The next thread woven into memory

¹⁶⁹ Richards, 1996: xxii.

¹⁷⁰ Bozzoli, B. 2004. *Theatres of Struggle and the End of Apartheid*. Johannesburg, South Africa: Wits University Press, 10.

¹⁷¹ Ibid: 11.

¹⁷² Lederach, J.P. 2005. *The Moral Imagination – The Art and Soul of Building Peace*. Oxford / New York: Oxford University Press; 141.

is that part of the ancient story that is passed on orally from generation to generation, this is called *remembered history*. From the repository of remembered history people overlay their rational and emotional memory of conflict with the reality of *lived experience*. Finally, all of these nuanced memories function as the bedrock for human interpretations of *current conflict events*.

To better comprehend the illusive notion of a sub-terrain *narrative discourse* that can socially or culturally guide the values and actions of whole nations and people groups, social psychologist Vamik Volkan extrapolates on what he terms “chosen traumas and chosen glories”¹⁷³. The word ‘chosen’ is deliberately employed in this instance to refer to the guise of corporate ‘selective memory’ whereby nations remember all that is valiant and heroic (historical glorification) and forget all that is despised and cowardly (selective amnesia) about their own past. Likewise, a glorified nation will position itself as victim by magnifying the most extreme traumas committed by other peoples or nations (enemy formation) in its history. According to Volkan, it is in the administration of this glorification of self and denigration of other that a nation is able to fabricate a patriotic state and hold their citizens together in unity. Dominick LaCapra refers to the “*founding trauma*” which, not unlike Volkan’s chosen trauma, evolves into the organizing principle around which personal and corporate identity is constructed.¹⁷⁴

On a similar trajectory, Dan Bar-On¹⁷⁵, a Jewish social psychologist applies theories of ‘displaced aggression’ (an example of a certain type of narrative discourse) to the national security agenda and defence policies of Israel in relation to the Palestinian peoples. Bar-On was preoccupied with the socio-reconciliation dynamics between children of Nazi SS Officers and children of Holocaust survivors. Later in his career, Bar-On facilitated rapprochement between Germans, Israelis and Palestinians by arranging for joint sustained dialogues among them. When containing these three groups in one space, Bar-On uncovered an uncanny tendency of the Israeli participants to associate with the German participants and continually disassociate from the Palestinians. At a surface

¹⁷³ Volkan, V. 1994. *The Need to have Enemies & Allies – From Clinical Practice to International Relations*. New Jersey and London: Jason Aronson Inc.

¹⁷⁴ LaCapra, D. 2001. *Writing History, Writing Trauma*. Baltimore & London: The John Hopkins University Press, 23.

¹⁷⁵ Bar-On, D. 1999. *The Indescribable and the Undiscussable – Reconstructing Human Discourse after Trauma*. Budapest, Hungary: Central European University Press.

level, this is explainable as Israel and Palestine remain embroiled in a modern day conflict and many Israelis have their roots in Europe. However, from a historical account this loses its rationality as the magnitude of the current violence perpetrated by Palestinians against Israelis pales in the face of the genocide violence inflicted by the German Holocaust against the Jews. Coupled with this, from a psycho-social perspective the commonalities between Israelis and Palestinians in terms of land, culture, religious heritage, temperament and original DNA would seem to be far stronger than that shared between Israeli and German experiences. To Bar-On it appeared as if the Israelis were doing to the Palestinians what they *could* not or *would* not do to the Germans. In this case, the power of the immediate ‘enemy’ script (narrative discourse) seemed to trump the generational grip of deep historical identity divides, thus confirming Bar-On’s premise of ‘displaced aggression’ when applied to Israeli – Palestinian relations.¹⁷⁶

Michael Ignatieff names “honouring the dead” as the most potent motivation (another form of narrative discourse) for violent revenge: “But revenge – morally considered - is a desire to keep faith with the dead, to honour the memory by taking up their cause where they left off”¹⁷⁷. This script, which dictates that people must account for the blood of their beloved (especially in death due to the unnatural causes), is a potent instinct; a culturally universal response residing in the mental and emotional architecture of the human soul. In poignant prose, African-American novelist Toni Morrison articulates this intimate but distressing link between victim and victimizer: “If you take a life, then you own it. You responsible for it. You can’t get rid of nobody by killing them. They are still there, and they yours now”¹⁷⁸. According to Ignatieff, it is possible to satisfy the ‘honouring of the dead’ script: “Reconciliation can stop the cycle of vengeance only if it can equal vengeance as a form of respect for the dead”¹⁷⁹. German theologian Geiko Muller-Fahrenholz saliently describes this kind of undertaking: “Evil acts create chains that lock perpetrators and victims together, usually in unconscious ways, producing a double history of effects which must be taken into account in

¹⁷⁶ This is a summary (albeit cursory) of an informal interview conducted with the late Professor Dan Bar-On in July 1999 in Jerusalem, Israel.

¹⁷⁷ Ignatieff, 1998: 188.

¹⁷⁸ Morrison, T. 2004. *Song of Solomon*. New York: Vintage Books.

¹⁷⁹ Ignatieff, 1998: 189.

reflecting on the nature of forgiveness”¹⁸⁰. These prominent *narrative discourses* (discussed above) of ‘chosen traumas and chosen glories’, ‘displaced aggression’ and the guttural call to ‘honour the dead’ will be rehearsed, applied and analysed in this unfolding study of Matabeleland violence.

In approaching the stratum of *remembered history*, Mahmood Mamdani assists the reader by skilfully deconstructing the Hutu-Tutsi ethnic identities and carefully placing them within the context of colonial historical-political manipulations. Mamdani traces the roots of the ethnic meaning of ‘Hutu’, a Kinyarwandan word historically used to categorise someone who did not own cattle (so that a Tutsi who did not own cattle was referred to as a Hutu). It was a class label utilised by the wealthy elite (rulers) to identify the agrarian peasantry; the majority of whom were poor and functioning as indentured servants in a serfdom structure. As these oppressed masses became more aware and empowered they began to shed their different Bantu tribal delineations and took on the unifying label of ‘Hutu’ so that today generations of Rwandese know themselves to be ‘born’ as ethnic Hutu.¹⁸¹ This form of identity conversion will be explored in more detail in the Matabeleland conflict, especially as it relates to the entrenched monolithic labels of ‘Shona’ and ‘Ndebele’.

Similarly, Rene Lemarchand maintains that Hutu-Tutsi ethnic identities are primarily moulded by a long history of genocide memory that has calcified into certain myths that are now held as objective truths about each other as ethnic groups. In this way, Lemarchand argues that ethnic identities in Burundi have been deeply shaped by (if not constructed from) the memories of genocide that played themselves out in vicious generational cycles of violence-shaping-narrative and narrative-shaping-violence.¹⁸² Again, there is an analogous comparison between the establishment of Burundian identities surfacing through the recounting of historical genocide and the identity formations of Shona and Ndebele being twined together with a history of violent interactions; more specifically the continual recollection of Ndebele raids on Shona

¹⁸⁰ Muller-Fahrenholz, G. 1996. *The Art of Forgiveness*. Geneva, Switzerland: WCC Publications, 25.

¹⁸¹ Mamdani, M. 2001. *When Victims Become Killers – Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

¹⁸² Lemarchand, R. 1994. *Burundi – Ethnic Conflict and Genocide*. Cambridge: Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Cambridge University Press.

peoples in the 1800s reinforced by the internal liberation movements faction-fighting along supposedly tribal lines.

The fields of narratology and trauma healing meet at the crux of the apex of *lived experience*. Dr. Judith Herman¹⁸³, in her benchmark work on trauma, speaks of the traumatic event as a life-shattering experience; a literal fragmenting of body, mind and spirit.¹⁸⁴ For Herman, trauma recovery is situated in the concept of life-story; that is healing can only come when the victim of trauma has been able to sequentially piece together the emotional memory (recall) as well as its meaning (interpretation) and then successfully re-integrate (action) the newly formed story into their own life narrative.

However, Dominick LaCapra sounds a cautionary note when working with trauma and the past: “But the indiscriminate generalization of the category of survivor and the overall conflation of history or culture with trauma, as well as the near fixation on enacting or acting out post-traumatic symptoms, have the effect of obscuring crucial historical distinctions...”¹⁸⁵ LaCapra problematises this drive to perform (act out) trauma in the *present* which is actually historical in nature, as a “compulsive repetition of traumatic scenes...scenes in which the past returns and the future is blocked or fatalistically caught up in a melancholic feedback loop”¹⁸⁶. LaCapra expresses his concern around the dilemma of “fidelity to trauma...one’s bond to the dead, especially with dead intimates may invest trauma with value and makes its reliving a painful but necessary commemoration or memorial to which one remains dedicated or at least bound”¹⁸⁷. This *trauma bonding* becomes an obstacle that can potentially invalidate the symbolic and therapeutic narrative processes of trauma debriefing, healing and closure.¹⁸⁸

This study maintains that the Matabeleland violence is closely tied to the ‘unfinished business’ of multiple and protracted trauma. Trauma is nurtured in the bowels

¹⁸³ Herman, J. 1997. *Trauma and Recovery – The aftermath of violence from domestic abuse to political terror*. New York: Basic Books-a Division of HarperCollins Publishers.

¹⁸⁴ See other essential works on trauma healing such as: Van der Kolk, A., McFarlane, A., and Weisaeth, L (Eds.). 1996. *Traumatic Stress – The Effects of Overwhelming Experience on Mind, Body and Society*, New York: The Guilford Press; Levine, P. 1997. *Walking the Tiger – Healing Trauma*, Berkeley, California: North Atlantic Books; and Hart, B. 2008. *Peacebuilding in Traumatized Societies*. Maryland: University Press of America, Inc.

¹⁸⁵ LaCapra, 2001: preface, xi.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid: 21.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid: 22.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid: 23.

of the violence system, in its machinations and structures. This research challenges the revolutionary paradigm that refuses to acknowledge the trauma (both individual and collective) that is birthed in violence, even when violence is employed in the service of a just cause – the struggle for liberation from oppression. The liberation movements of ZAPU and ZANU and their leaders suffered severe trauma at the hands of their white Rhodesian oppressors. Progressively, this traumatic transmission from the oppressors began to violently manifest internally in the liberation movements as they struggled to keep order, loyalty and consistency within their own ranks.

After independence in 1980, the division that had long existed in the liberation movements was cemented into categories of victor (ruling majority) and vanquished (minority opposition). Now locked in a bitter contestation for political power, the revenge *cycle of victimisation-aggression*¹⁸⁹ (victim becoming killer) between the past colonial oppressor and the oppressed masses was re-enacted on the stage of Matabeleland, the base of the only African opposition. Former victims (ZANU) became perpetrators of new forms of violence and the supposed liberated (ZAPU and the Matabeleland civilians) once again were enveloped in the dark cloud of traumatic violence of which they were the focus. Likewise, it is not difficult to make application of this regenerative cycle of mimetic violence to the destructive conflict that Zimbabwe currently finds itself embroiled in.

2.4.2. The Intersection of Temporal and Spatial Dimensions of Conflict

New historiography and narratology have identified the importance of taking into consideration the spatial location; the actual geographical landscape of the setting in which historical and current agency takes place. The idea being that the natural environment in which conflict is played out is not neutral; a sterile, non-descript backdrop in the unfolding drama of historical reality. The habitat has an intimate connection to the human performance. Belinda Bozzoli¹⁹⁰ speaks to the critical ingredient of

¹⁸⁹ Helmick, R. & Peterson, R. 2001. (Eds.) *Forgiveness and Reconciliation – Religion, Public Policy, and Conflict Transformation*. Philadelphia & London: Templeton Foundation Press. This model of mimetic violence was formulated by Russian social-psychologist Olga Botchavova from her work with refugee populations in the former Yugoslavia. Botchavova contrasts this Revenge Cycle to a Cycle of Reconciliation with the decisive juncture being whether the traumatised victim suppresses their grief and loss which leads to a sense of justified revenge, or expresses their grief and loss in a healthy way thereby leading to reconciliation.

¹⁹⁰ Bozzoli, 2004: 7-12.

township enclosures (which in most cases were small areas of land in which large groups of people lived in over crowded and cramped conditions). Bozzoli makes the link between enclosure and rebellion motivating the notion that physical space actually engenders rebellion (an historical example being the city of Paris at the time of the French Revolution). Congruently, on a more opportunistic note, a tightly bounded space also provides a highly focused stage on which the acting cast can aim the ‘spot-light’ of violent performance for those who are watching from the outside. As Paul Richards so poetically depicts the wanton, destructive performance of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels of Sierra Leone: “Their violence trashes a rotten set, flapping in the breeze, of a film epic in which they no longer believe”¹⁹¹.

Richards places his spatial analysis of the Sierra Leonean civil war in the context of the rain forests of that country. Richards carefully weaves together the primacy of the rain forests where the mineral wealth (diamonds) were located and as a place where the RUF rebel movement could hide and train for the rigours of natural and human induced violence, forge out a new sub-system and create a sub-culture of values and norms that could justify their actual and ideological existence.

Likewise, Alexander, McGregor and Ranger¹⁹², the authors of one of the most detailed accounts of the Matabeleland history, shape their spatial landscape around the ‘dark forests’ (translated as “Amagusu Amnyama” in Ndebele) of Shangani Game Reserve; more specifically, the two districts of Nkayi and Lupane. The ‘dark forests’ of Matabeleland have become a symbol of resistance, the place of struggle against oppression. The Shangani Forests are rich with symbolisms of being hidden and unknown; chaotic places of fear and violence for those on the outside. However, for the inhabitants who reside there it engenders a place of refuge and protection. These ‘dark forests’ represent the marginal places (the backstage or the stage wings concealed by curtains) of the drama of conflict in Matabeleland. This articulated description of an *isolated, alienating location* runs parallel to how the people of Matabeleland position

¹⁹¹ Richards. 1996:

¹⁹² Alexander, J., McGregor, J., & Ranger, T. 2000. *Violence & Memory – One Hundred Years in the ‘Dark Forests’ of Matabeleland*. Oxford: James Curry. See also pioneering work on narrative history by: Ranger, T. 1999. *Voices from the Rocks: Nature, Culture & History in the Matapos Hills of Zimbabwe*. South Africa: Baobab Books.

themselves in the official political narrative that has been given undivided credence in Zimbabwe for many years.¹⁹³

Interrogating the intersection of spatial and temporal dimensions of conflict, John Paul Lederach espouses three overarching peace-building principles: ‘one must go backward, in order to go forward’ referring to the horizontal need to deal with the *history* of conflict in order to build a viable peace in the *future*; ‘one must go down, in order to build up’ referring to the vertical need to dig deep into the *roots* of the conflict in order to lay a solid *foundation* for peace to endure; and ‘one must create more in order to have less’ referring to the process of forming many conflict-containing *structures* in order to *minimize* violence.¹⁹⁴ In this precarious movement on a horizontal level (between the past, the present and the future), on vertical level (identifying the conflict at all strata of society, and on a process level (designing innovative systems to diminish violence), Lederach proposes utilising an analysis grid-system that lodges social conflict in a series of interlocking spheres consisting of *symptoms*, influenced by *structures*, which in turn are under-girded by *processes of power* (both informal and formal) which are motivated and propelled by visceral *patterns of behaviour & identity formation*.¹⁹⁵ The key to this encompassing framework of conflict diagnosis is that it is simultaneously cyclical and linear in nature and progression.

Robert Mandel dissects inter-group conflicts at the cross-section of the *temporal dimensions* (incorporating tensions between the past and present) and the *spatial dimensions* (incorporating tensions between self and others in relational proximity).¹⁹⁶ The mismanagement of these inherent conflict tensions can result in what Mandel delineates as the crucial elements of conflict: “*distorted perceptions, inappropriate decisions, and severe conflicts.*” The following chart summarises Mandel’s thesis exemplifying the dynamics of psycho-social forces at play in this conflictive time-space matrix:¹⁹⁷

¹⁹³ Ibid: 19.

¹⁹⁴ Taken from the course materials of “*The Fundamentals of Peacebuilding*”, by Professor JP Lederach. The Summer Peacebuilding Institute (SPI) of the Eastern Mennonite University, Virginia, USA. 1998.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Mandel, R. 1979. *Perception, Decision-making and Conflict*. Washington DC: University Press of America, Inc., 11.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid: 15-48.

	Temporal Dimension:	Spatial Dimension:
1. Distorted Perceptions:	Congruity and Dissonance: holding on to tensions between consistent and discrepant information about the other (both past and present).	Ethnocentrism: viewing one's own actions in a more favourable light than others would (self-glorification).
2. Inappropriate Decisions:	Inertia and Rigidity: only acting within past knowledge, resisting change in the present, and refusing to entertain new ways of being in the future.	Group-think: majority unanimity overrides realistic appraisal of alternative courses of action (inclusively internal focus).
3. Severe Conflicts:	Frustration-Deprivation: acting out past expectations not being matched by present achievements or future ideals.	Rank Disequilibrium: assuming that all systems are stratified and contain inherent status differences that cannot be changed.

Bozzoli, Richards, Alexander et al, open up new avenues of thinking about conflict and its intersection with historical-geographical landscapes. This historical-geographical examination of space will be applied to Matabeleland as the 'stage' from which the violence was enacted. There are at least three keys underpinning the conflict fault-lines of the Matabeleland region: the 'dark forests' represent a strategic, yet marginal place for the opposition to incubate a rebellion, a safe place for the inhabitants but a dangerous place for outsiders; the natural mineral wealth of Matabeleland provides the battleground for contested scarce resources and the continual droughts, lack of water and food shortages produce convenient rupture points for the powerful ZANU-PF ruling party to 'punish' the opposition through developmental neglect; and the ZANU-PF, through its North Korean trained Fifth Brigade used containment tactics (roadblocks, curfews and media censure) and targeted symbolic public places (the stages) such as schools, missions, and buses to display their terror.

Lederach and Mandel reinforce this study by delineating frameworks that break-down the systematic and categorical analysis of the patterns of temporal and spatial intersections in group conflict situations. These authors have assisted this research to identify the micro component parts of the macro whole of a given conflict scenario. These particular pieces of the scaffolding that fortify a national meta-narrative are amply evident in the Matabeleland conflict of the early 1980s. They illuminate and supply the

explanatory boundaries and containers in which the ZANU-PF's narrative discourse was moulded and shaped into the forceful entity of social change.

2.4.3. Conflict as Political Theatre of Struggle

Mark Juergensmeyer in his seminal work on religious terrorism coins the term “theatre of terror”¹⁹⁸. Juergensmeyer understands performance as both an *event* aimed at making a symbolic statement of protest, and also as an *act* aimed at trying to change reality.¹⁹⁹ Terror campaigns then, represent more than just a crisis scenario, they provide the coherent habitat necessary to “mobilise power”²⁰⁰ through the mask of violence. Juergensmeyer articulates his analogy further: “In looking at religious terrorism as theatre, the appropriate place to begin is the stage - the location where the acts are committed, or rather, performed”²⁰¹.

Novelist Don DeLillo describes terrorism as “the language of being noticed”²⁰². In order for violent terror to accomplish its intended purpose it needs to be seen; it must have an audience, not just any audience but a target group of people who have been identified as intimately connected (politically, economically, emotionally or physically attached) to the aims of the terror campaign. In Juergensmeyer's words, “Terrorism without its horrified witnesses would be pointless as a play without an audience”²⁰³.

Bozzoli suggests that when theories of ‘dramaturgy’ are employed in the study of socio-political movements they follow certain rhythms and pathways of activity including “*scripting, staging, performing* and *interpreting* their definitions of power as counter to the dominant ones...”²⁰⁴ These dramaturgical practices are expounded on in more detail in Chapter Three (Research Methodology) of this study. Bozzoli spurs on imagination by identifying various unique ‘theatres of struggle’ in the context of Alexandra Township in South Africa, such as the actual geographical borders of the Township enclosure (including the stadiums), localised mob killings of informants on specific streets, official dramas of large public events such as funerals and protest marches, private, yet highly

¹⁹⁸ Juergensmeyer, M. 2000. *Terror in the Mind of God*. Berkley / Los Angeles: University of California Press, 119.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid: 124.

²⁰⁰ Richards, 1996: xxiii.

²⁰¹ Juergensmeyer, 2000: 126.

²⁰² DeLillo, D. 1991. *Mao II*. New York: Penguin Books, 157.

²⁰³ Juergensmeyer, 2000: 139.

²⁰⁴ Bozzoli, 2004: 11.

theatrical people's courts and the manufacturing of memory in the proceedings of public dramas such as criminal court and the national Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings.²⁰⁵ Bozzoli thickens the descriptive text of dramaturgical theatre:

“The verbal and symbolic script followed in each proto-theatrical performance during the rebellion – a riot, a funeral, a neck-lacing, a people's court trial – revealed the varying power of signs. This rested in the ways in which old and new genres were used, developed, or mixed together, the processes of ‘script-writing’ and its relationships to powerful players in the rebellion, the availability of symbolic resources and the effectiveness of the props used to ensure that the space itself acquired symbolic meaning.”²⁰⁶

This study will argue that the Matabeleland violence did not happen spontaneously but was instead the outgrowth of a convergence of constructed historical conflict memory and well-orchestrated socio-political manipulations manifesting in a prolonged performance (theatrical drama) of violence that was effectively utilized to appease the international community (audience) and force Matabeleland to conform to the meta-narrative of the ZANU-PF ideology. The Gukurahundi violence conveniently fuelled the official ZANU-PF interpretation of a populist patriotic history (particularly as it related to charge of counter-revolutionary activity), the ZANU-PF's assumed superior status as representing the ethnic majority (initially backed up by mass election victories), and its keen interest to gain and retain power in the Zimbabwean political landscape (exhibited in the push for a one-party state).

2.5. Conclusion

In summary, this literature review has attempted to reframe the notion of conflict to be seen through the lens of social constructivism; more particularly investigating the nature of narrative as experienced through *practice, discourse and performance* and as it relates to the Matabeleland violence of the early 1980s. Section one expounded the **practice** of social conflict theory and makes application (and critique) of four categories of explanation attached to the Matabeleland context: ethno-cultural; personal-relational; political-structural; and historical-ideological. The following points were emphasised:

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Bozzoli, 2004: 12.

- *Ethno-cultural interpretation* – Although ethnicity has played a role in the Matabeleland conflict, to ascribe this violence to a strictly essentialist ethnic-based conflict would fall prey to *reductionism* and grave *oversimplification*.
- *Personal-relational interpretation* – While there is certain merit to character studies, memoirs and autobiographies, they tend to be anecdotal in nature and in so doing they place an overemphasis on *personal agency* (neglecting structure) in conflict escalation.
- *Political-structural interpretation* – In contrast to the personal-relational explanation, this category gives full weight to *corporate agency* (neglecting personal) as the only legitimate force in conflict transformation.
- *Historical-ideological interpretation* – This layer of analysis incorporates and translates the dynamics of both the individual and the collective narrative in conflict happenings. However with its focus on the past it often fails to *predict* the changes (either personal or corporate) that may occur in the future.

The premise of this study is that narrative discourse becomes the bridging glue, the conduit through which the disparate threads of interpretation mentioned above can be held together and made sense of in a contained whole.

Section Two of this Chapter introduced the reader to the field of narrative **discourse** analysis. This section highlighted certain tributaries of narratology such as linguistics, mythology, literary criticism, new historicism and various models of narrative practice in therapy and mediation. Each of these disciplines offers some necessary description of the instrumentalities through which this research was conducted. A number of significant conclusions were drawn:

- Narratology understands that interpretive meaning is found in the *content* (what) the *form* (how), the *authorship* (who), the *motivation* (why) and the *time* (when) and *place* (where) of any given text (whether written or spoken).
- Narratology is always sceptical of conventional historical accounting (annals of facts), rather it questions the objectivity claim of dominant meta-narratives that embody a ‘disciplinary’ function which often silences and subjugates all counter-narratives that represent an alternative reality.

- Narratology gives interpretative legitimacy to *how* ‘scripts’ of conflict or peace become *preferred social constructions* that are produced by the relational-behaviour interactions emanating from narrative discourse.

Section Three of this Chapter explored the notion of conflict as **performance**; the manufacturing of power through a skilful manipulation of stage-managed violence as an expressive and generative resource. This section illuminates three integrated peace-building frameworks: conceptions of conflict memory; intersections of temporal and spatial dimensions of conflict; and conflict as political theatre of struggle. The main findings were as follows:

- Conflict memory is nested in societal narrative discourse (chosen traumas and chosen glories) remembered history (oral traditions of ‘enemy formation’ passed on from one generation to the next), lived experience (personal, actual traumatic events) and interpretations of current conflict events (confirming partisan perceptions).
- The geographical landscape, terrain or actual location (stage) where conflict is enacted is the place where time and space intersect in conflict.
- In the drama of violent conflict the antagonists are the *actors*, the public spaces are the *stage sets*, the rhetorical language are the *scripts*, and the symbolic paraphernalia utilised are the *props* required for an effective performance.
- Theatres of terror are violent performances that are both *events* aimed at making a statement of protest and *acts* aimed at trying to change reality.
- Terror campaigns are not just chaotic crisis scenarios, they provide a coherent habitat necessary to ‘mobilise power’ through the mask of violence.
- Terrorism needs a horrified audience in order to accomplish its purposes; not just any audience, but it must be a targeted group of people intimately connected to the aims of the terror campaign.

This literature review lays the groundwork to begin to comprehend how the narrative discourse used to justify the violence of Gukurahundi was socially crafted and politically reproduced by the ZANU-PF regime in order to solidify its power, appease the international community and at the same time impose a violent script of terror, fear and

intimidation on the psychological and experiential life stories (texts) of the Matabeleland people in the early 1980s.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology – Surfacing Dominant and Subjugated Stories

3.1. Research Summary

The crux of this research study revolves around understanding the narratives (both dominant and subjugated discourses) surrounding the violence system as it was expressed in Matabeleland, Zimbabwe between the years of 1980-1988. This is accomplished by exploring the historical socio-political construction of five salient themes: *ethnicity, nationalism, loyalty, legitimacy and unity*. As a qualitative study it utilized an ‘interpretive-critical’ epistemological lens through which narrative discourse was analysed with a focus on content (meaning), structure (form) and performance (interaction)²⁰⁷.

The research engaged three different instruments of measurement: literature review; document analysis; and open interviews. The literature review explored the intersection between social conflict, narrative analysis and peace-building theory. In conducting document analysis a historical criticism frame was applied to review a broad range of historical-political documents from the time period in question. Thirty-five open interviews were conducted and drew from a purposive and peer-identified research sample as representative of eight sectors of society: political, ex-combatant, media, legal, education, church, women, and rural agricultural populations. These identified sectors featured most prominently in the literature review and document analysis inventory conducted around this conflict period in Matabeleland. The interview segment not only identified persons from these seven sectors, but they also represented a cross-section of social positions from former high ranking government officials to rural village farmers.

Research validity and verification measurements were based on instrument piloting, reflexivity, peer review, and corroboration of findings. This study extrapolates significant themes that buttressed the meta-narrative of repressive violence constructed by the ZANU-PF Government in the 1980s, unearths various silent scripts of counter narratives that existed in Matabeleland at that time and makes linkages between the surfacing of subjugated narratives and the need for constructing peace in the context of current day Zimbabwe.

²⁰⁷ Elliot, J. 2005. *Using Narrative in Social Research – Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. London: SAGE Publications, 38.

3.2. Epistemological Foundations of the Study

3.2.1. Qualitative and Quantitative Considerations

The substance of this study is the dissection of narrative discourse and its powerful influence on the “creation of preferred realities”²⁰⁸. Furthermore, this study is interested in how the clash of these contested, sometimes imagined realities is linked to the acting out of violence and the building of peace. Conflict studies are inherently complex because of the extremely unpredictable nature of human interaction in the midst of conflict situations. Thus, when researching conflict as social phenomena, great care must be given to the methodological plan. While many social conflicts have been studied with quantitative instruments, it is the bias of the author that qualitative research is the most appropriate approach to be utilised in the study of conflict phenomena. Quantitative research is effective when looking at units of statistical analysis such as the number of deaths in a certain locale²⁰⁹ or, when quantifying units of ideas held by certain segments of society (e.g. random survey methods that aim to test beliefs about particular forms of violence, or statistical incidence of specific violent acts in a cross-section of a nation, community, school or family).

However, when research moves into the perceptual realm of how and why people speak about, attach meaning to, and act out conflict realities other methods of measurement are required. It is from this premise that this study embarked on a qualitative research design with narrative analysis as the core methodology. Narrative criticism, in general terms, concentrates its attention on the many points of view (implied authors, authorial narration, first-person author, third-person author, narrator, embedded narration, and voices) represented in the narrative text.²¹⁰ The epistemological roots of narrative research (spanning from structured literary criticism frameworks²¹¹ to free-flow conversational analysis) thrive on patterns of inter-subjectivities, metaphor, symbol and

²⁰⁸ Freedman, J & Combs, G. 1996. *Narrative Therapy – The Social Construction of Preferred Realities*. W. W. Norton & Company; New York.

²⁰⁹ Roberts, Lafta, Garfield, Khudhairi, & Bumham. *Mortality before and after the 2003 invasion of Iraq: cluster sample survey*. Lancet 2004; 364: 1857-64. (Published online October 29, 2004 – <http://image.thelancet.com/extras/04art10342web.pdf>)

²¹⁰ Martin, W. 1986. *Recent Theories of Narrative*. Ithica & London: Cornell University Press, 135.

²¹¹ See Labov, W. (ed). 1972. *The Transformation of Experience in Narrative Syntax*. *Language in the Inner City: Studies in the Black English Vernacular*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press; Burke, K. 1950. *A Rhetoric of Motives*. New York: Prentice-Hall; Gee, J.P. 1986. Units in the Production of Narrative Discourses. *Discourse Processes*.

myth²¹². These qualitative realities of ‘knowing’ are not quantifiable in objective, measurable properties, nor are they independent of the observer (researcher) and his or her instruments²¹³. Narrative research methodology inhabits an inherent qualitative bent.

3.2.2. Interpretive-Critical Lens

For purposes of narrowing the meaning of qualitative research, the underlying epistemology of this study is what may be termed an ‘Interpretive-critical’ approach to knowledge generation. The positivist approach to objective knowing asserts that there is measurable theory that stands alone waiting to be discovered outside of the practical application that transpires in subjective human interaction. In opposition to this, the interpretive-critical stance is concerned with two essential elements of learning. Firstly, the word ‘interpretive’ connotes a semiotic interest in the meaning of signs, symbols and metaphor. Interpretive researchers presume that “...access to reality is only through social constructions such as language, consciousness and shared meanings”,²¹⁴.

Anthropologist Clifford Geertz called this rise of narrative research the “interpretive turn” in social sciences.²¹⁵ Secondly, the word ‘critical’ denotes a hermeneutical interest in the meaning of texts. As in the words of Michael Myers, “Critical researchers assume that social reality is historically constituted and that it is produced and reproduced by people.”²¹⁶ These two concepts twinned together in this study have become the conduit through which the contextual narrative discourse surrounding the Matabeleland conflict was researched and analysed. The *narrative* (story) invites us to the table of interpretation, and the *discourse* (the meaning attached to story) beckons us to critically unpack its ingredients.

3.3. Research Analysis Modalities

3.3.1. Narrative as Social Construction

Peace scholar and author John Paul Lederach states that “...A constructivist view suggests that people act on the basis of the meaning things have for them. Meaning is

²¹² De Saussure, F. 1954. *Course in General Linguistics*. Oxford, England: Ducksworth Publishers.

²¹³ Myers, Michael D. 2006/03/20. Qualitative Research in Information Systems. <http://www.qual.auckland.ac.nz/> p.3.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ C. Geertz. 1973. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books.

²¹⁶ Myers, Qualitative Research in Information Systems. 2006/03/20.

created through shared and accumulated knowledge”²¹⁷. This study exposes the ‘storied’ scaffolding that under-girded the violence system constructed by the Zimbabwe government in its attempts to deal with the perceived threat of dissident rebellion in Matabeleland in the early 1980s. The implication here is that the violence system cannot stand without the props of a generative narrative discourse. This thinking cuts to the heart of the debate around language and meaning. Is meaning an essentialist concept, something that develops intuitively in the internal recesses of the human sub-conscious mind? Or is meaning a continuous external ‘work in progress’ constantly being reformed, re-configured and renewed through the social spheres of dialogue and human inter-connectivity? Which of these two essential parts of human knowing (internal or external) comes first? The cognitive-dominance school of thought would promulgate that meaning is birthed internally and then externalised when people attach words to it (building language around meaning), while the proponents of the language-dominance camp would posit just the opposite sequence of origin. That is, the language comes first and then out of the expressive-act meaning is produced (building meaning around language).²¹⁸

Social constructionists maintain that there is a symbiotic relationship of inter-subjectivity between meaning and language. In other words, language generates meaning and meaning generates language and that both are pivotal to the creation of our social reality. However, when coming to the question of origins, social constructivists would quickly add that meaning does not come to fruition until it is given expression either verbally, in written form, or in performative action. Meaning is imbued with its essential order, its influence to transform people, and its power to change situations *only* after it has been articulated or acted out. Don Cupitt believes that stories (language) come first in making the world intelligible and memorable. In his words, “Works of art, then, do not function merely to supply outlets for in-built and already determinate natural feelings. Their job is rather to produce our feelings, differentiate them and attach symbolic values to them”²¹⁹. It is on this assumptive basis of generative-knowing and its linkages to

²¹⁷ Lederach, J.P. 1995. *Preparing for Peace – Conflict Transformation Across Cultures*. New York: Syracuse University Press, p. 10.

²¹⁸ Forrester, M. 1996. *Psychology of Language – A Critical Introduction*. London / New Delhi: Sage Publications.

²¹⁹ Cupitt, D. 1991. *What is a Story?* London: SCM Press Ltd, 18.

reality-formation that this study of the violence in Matabeleland was begun and narrative analysis became the operational choice for its research mode.

3.3.2. Narrative as Meaning, Form and Interaction

For purposes of this study narrative analysis has been defined as: “Analysis of a chronologically told story, with a focus on how elements are sequenced, why some elements are evaluated differently from others, how the past shapes perceptions of the present, how the present shapes perceptions of the past, and how both shape perceptions of the future”²²⁰. Expanding on this definition, this research embraced a three-prong approach to narrative dissection based on the functions of language as a whole. These three overall measurable segments of narrative are: content (semantics); structure (syntax); and performance (discourses).²²¹ Narrative content has to do with *what* story is being told. Story-telling can be accomplished in two ways: one is to describe past events chronologically, the other is to evaluate the meaning of those events and experiences in the lives of the protagonists. The structural dimension of narrative has to do with *how* the story is told, the manner it is put together and the form it is packaged in. The performance ideation has to do with *why* the story is being told and the responses it elicits in the process. In the words of Elliot, performance is the “interactional and institutional contexts in which narratives are produced, recounted, and consumed”²²².

The overall research aim of this project was to better understand the narratives surrounding the violence in the Matabeleland conflict: what did they mean, how were they formed, and why were they used? The specific questions emanating from this interrogation were:

1. What were the contents (meanings) of the narratives (both dominant and subjugated) that were created around the violence systems in Matabeleland between the years of 1980-1988?
2. How were these narrative discourses constructed (structured or formed)?
3. Why (performance) and how (interaction) were these narratives used and manipulated to accomplish certain ends?

²²⁰ <http://www2.chass.ncsu.edu/garson/pa765/narrativ.htm> 2006/03/20.

²²¹ Elliot, 2005:38.

²²² *ibid.*

As is clear from the above summation of the research questions and investigations, all three of these elements of narrative analysis (meaning, form and interaction) were woven into, and provide a cross-cutting function across the gamete of research methodology strategies. The below matrix gives clarity to this cross-sectional function of the three-prong analysis grid-system that has been under discussion:

Research Approaches:

Analysis Grid-System:	Literature Review	Document Analysis	Open Interviews
1.) Content (Meaning)	↓	↓	↓
2.) Structure (Form)	↓	↓	↓
3.) Performance (Interaction)	↓	↓	↓

3.4. Research Approaches

3.4.1. Literature Review

The literature review explored the intersection between the fields of social conflict theory, narratology and peace-building practice. The literature review was conducted in a tri-partite structure. In the first section, the research overviewed the available literature published on the Matabeleland conflict and categorised it according to the most salient social conflict theories. In the second section, the research introduced and explored the study of narrative; its ‘root’ origins, its theories and its application to the topic at hand. In the third and final section, the research highlighted and gave credence to a number of pivotal theories from the peace-building field that combine the analysis of conflict from the material, social and symbolic²²³ lenses.

3.4.2. Document Analysis

Narrative analysis must take cognizance of both the verbal scripts and written texts of history that are available. Due to the politically sensitive nature and logistical hurdles around accessibility in Matabeleland during the time of this study, it was imperative that this research plan included a careful document analysis as a critical piece of its method of data collection. The atmosphere of restrictions, limitations, and

²²³ Schirch, Lisa. 2005. *Ritual and Symbol in Peacebuilding*. Bloomfield, CT. USA: Kumarian Press, Inc. 33.

repercussions that currently pervades the Matabeleland region did impede the gathering of data from living sources. Thus, this study ensured that data collection came from multiple sources, both oral and written.

Conventional historical research is based on certain objective assumptions that take an “evolutionary approach” (cascading development) to the recording of history.²²⁴ It is believed that objective views of history can be realized when one can trace the historical events from actual experience, to oral transmission, to written documentation, after which various interpretations can be arrived at. Sourcing, dating and the corroboration of facts are all part of this traditional historical reconstruction effort.

In regards to the interplay of narrative and history, Don Cupitt defines history as “a great tangle of competing stories”, or “the provisional outcome of a contest of stories”²²⁵. In his terms, “Truth is the state of argument, truth is the story on top at present, truth is a precarious and always shifting consensus”²²⁶. His concern is around the conception of “original documents” by which many historians claim their validity. After all, no matter how ancient the original source may be, it is already inter-textually laced with the interface of many earlier stories. Adding further complexity to the concept of “historical records”, Cupitt exclaims:

“If being ‘constrained by evidence’ means only of borrowing bits of material from the public record, in the right chronological order and joined up by plausible casual links, then I fear that life in a modern pluralistic democracy shows that it’s not sufficient to establish a common ground of agreed objective public knowledge”²²⁷.

Almost making jest of the debate swirling around the perspective character of history-writing, Cupitt expresses his amazement at the idea of the existence of fact and declares that all we really have and all we will ever have are two or more conflicting angles or viewpoints on a matter of history. In his mind, the real issue is how much dialogue is produced from these contrary portrayals of history, and how many new stories emerge as a result. In summary, Cupitt is clear on his stance: “Indeed, one might usefully

²²⁴ Powell, Mark A. 1990. *What is Narrative Criticism?* Minneapolis: Fortress Press

²²⁵ Cupitt, 1991: 20.

²²⁶ *ibid.*

²²⁷ Cupitt, 1991: 83.

define the historian's purpose in writing as an attempt to raise the level of public debate about a contemporary issue, by telling a parable set in the past about it"²²⁸.

As this study is not aimed at a historical revisionist experiment, it will not employ a conventional historical analysis but instead will work within a historical criticism framework.²²⁹ Historical criticism is about the work of deconstructing and reconstructing history. The critic of history takes seriously the subjectivity and agency of the author of history, their worldview, values and beliefs, and the place or status they hold within the setting they are writing from. The historical critic is also fully aware that history is never written about in a 'vacuum', meaning that the context in which the historian is writing from is crucial. What is the nature of the socio-political climate in which this historical account is being recreated? What are the internal and external factors of influence that may be affecting the perceptions of the author(s) as they produce history? What are the 'agendas' of historians? The student of historical analysis must not only ask questions of *what* (subject matter) and *when* (dates and times), but they must also ask the questions of *who*, *how* and *why* are people writing history.

To this end, this study determined to gather and analyse evidence from four types of historical texts: primary sources (data from archives, museums, libraries, or personal collections); secondary sources (the work of other historians writing and commenting on history); running records (documentaries kept by private groups or NGOs); and recollections (autobiographies, memoirs, and oral histories). Unfortunately, materials from the time period under consideration were limited for at least three reasons. Firstly, it has been documented that certain records of ZAPU and ZIPRA were destroyed during the violence of the 1980s. Secondly, the independent and international media (some of which represented dissenting voices²³⁰) were severely restricted from freedom of expression and publication of any information contrary to the state-supported viewpoint during that time period. Thirdly, critical archives of sensitive material from that era have been put under

²²⁸ Cupitt, 1991: 86.

²²⁹ Veesser, H.A., (ed). 1989. *The New Historicism*. New York / London: Routledge Press, 1989.

²³⁰ Donald Trelford, the Editor of the London *Observer* at that time of the Gukurahundi is one such example of a dissenting voice. See article entitled, "Journalist who first exposed Matabeleland Atrocities", <http://www.newzimbabwe.com/pages/trelford.html>. Posted 12/30/2000.

lock and key until such a time as they are deemed to be instrumental in reconstructing that historically tumultuous period.²³¹

The document analysis of this study revolved around primary sources such as newspaper clippings, investigative reports, internet postings, political communiqués, published speech scripts, and other personal narrative writings of ex-combatants and the civilian population in Matabeleland.²³² Secondary sources involved historical books, research dissertations and statistical research reports on the Matabeleland conflict from the specific time period of interest.²³³ Recollections data was extracted from the numerous published biographies on the persons of Robert Mugabe, Joshua Nkomo, the ZANU, ZAPU and Zimbabwe as a nation.²³⁴ The document analysis processes ran congruently and carried a cross-sectional function throughout the research time-frame.

3.5. Open Interviews: Story Analysis

3.5.1. Story as “the organising principle for human action”²³⁵

“Human Rationality needs to be seen as embedded in our language, our social interaction, the play of our feelings and the temporally-extended stories of our lives...And this narrative kind of rationality is active, passionate, and practical, forming

²³¹ In conversation with the South African History Archive (SAHA), it is believed (although there is no definitive proof) that there are approximately 2,000 Matabeleland victim's statements locked away in the UK. These documents were gathered for the publication of 'Breaking the Silence' in 1997, and are now under protective storage in the possible event that an official Truth Commission process would be undertaken in Zimbabwe in the near future. In any case, these documents are not accessible to the public.

²³² Research drew from Zimbabwean newspaper archives, a collection of news clippings on the history of the Zimbabwean struggle for independence from the Drum Magazine, writings of Matabeleland political prisoners, recent victim's statements, political song lyrics, political advertisements, and historical video footage. Access to museums and other political-historical archives in Zimbabwe were at times limited.

²³³ Alexander, J, McGregor, J, & Ranger, T. 2000. *Violence & Memory – One Hundred Years in the 'Dark Forests' of Matabeleland*. Oxford: James Curry. Yap, Katri Pohjolainen. 2001. *Uprooting the Weeds – Power, Ethnicity and Violence in Matabeleland Conflict 1980 – 1987*. Printed by Elanders Novum, Stockholm. Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) and Legal Resources Foundation (LRF). 1997. *Breaking the Silence – Building True Peace: A Report on the Disturbances in Matabeleland and the Midlands 1980-1988*. Harare: CCJP / LRF. Glass, Stafford. 1968. *The Matabele War*. London: Longmans. ²³⁴ Nkomo, Joshua. 1984. *Nkomo – The Story of My Life*. London: Methuen. Meldrum, Andrew. 2004. *Where we have hope – A Memoir of Zimbabwe*. London: John Murry. Chan, Stephen. 2003. *Robert Mugabe – A Life of Power and Violence*. London / New York: I.B. Tauris. Meredith, Martin. 2002. *Mugabe – Power, Plunder and the Struggle for Zimbabwe*. Jeppesstown, SA: Jonathan Ball Publishers (PTY) Ltd. Todd, Judith G. 2007. *Through the Darkness*. Cape Town, SA: Zebra Press. Godwin, Peter. 2006. *When A Crocodile Eats the Sun*. Johannesburg, SA: Picador Africa. Hill, Geoff. 2005. *What Happens After Mugabe?* Cape Town, SA: Zebra Press. Nyarota, Geoffrey. 2006. *Against the Grain – Memoirs of a Zimbabwean Newsmen*. Cape Town: Zebra Press.

²³⁵ Kohler Riessman, Catherine. 1993. *Narrative Analysis*. Oxford: James Currey Ltd, 1.

and producing life.”²³⁶ Story narrative is not just a means to find out about the world; a descriptive conduit for information. It is a producer of data, and a creator of interpretation and meaning.²³⁷ Narrative is about people making sense out of their experience. Narrative stories are told to make a point not just to share information. The ‘constructivist’ approach seeks to discover how a sense of social order is created through talk and interaction. In the words of research methodology author, Jane Elliot: “Stories are...life as well as about life”²³⁸.

The open interview process brings certain unique advantages over other instrumentalities of research. The open interview is more personal in nature, it allows for a more free-flow conversational style, it provides the freedom to explore issues in more depth, and it can at times reveal data that participants would otherwise not be willing to disclose in a more public group environment. The disadvantages of this interview instrument are that because of its intensive personal focus participants can sometimes feel intimidated or uncomfortable, which could lead to an unnatural, formalised or stilted expression of data. Also, interviewing can often err on the side of subjectivity bias, an issue that is of paramount concern in the qualitative research arena.

For this research effort, an open interview format has been selected precisely because of how it lends itself to the narrative analysis aims and objectives of this project. In order to build on, and compliment the literature review and the document analysis, 35 open individual interviews were conducted with representatives from each of the earlier identified sectors of society; political, ex-combatant, media, legal, education, church, women, rural agriculturalist populations. The goal in this interview process was to gather individual story narratives about the experience of violence in Matabeleland during the time in question. Out of these personal stories various themes used to describe and give shape to the dominant and subjugated narratives of Matabeleland were examined. These story highlights and discourse landscapes were then transcribed, compiled and compared with the findings from the literature review and document analyses processes. The interviewees were also encouraged to reflect on any possible connections between their

²³⁶ Cupitt, 1991: 49.

²³⁷ Elliot, 2005: 17-18.

²³⁸ Elliot, 2005: 18-20.

experiences of violence during the Matabeleland conflict and the crisis being faced in Zimbabwe at present.

Steiner Kvale²³⁹ espouses to a thorough interview ‘life-cycle’ that entails seven distinct phases.

- Thematising (setting an aim / goal for the interview),
- Designing (giving ample time to developing the appropriate questions),
- Interviewing (timing, venue, atmosphere, recording and managing subjectivity)
- Transcribing (detailed conversational format / ‘units of discourse’ uncovered),
- Analysing (form, substance and performance),
- Verifying (authenticity, reliability and validity), and
- Reporting (writing up and / or publishing the findings).

These phases provided a general ‘map’ followed in setting-up, conducting and analysing the findings of the interviews, and served as the back-drop context in which to place and ‘track’ the particular interview sessions as they progressed.

3.5.2. Story as structured narrative flow

The interview component of this research concentrated on gathering raw data of uninterrupted (as much as possible) story scripts and converging themes describing the experience of the Matabeleland violence from various societal sectors. The challenge was then to find the terms, strictures and boundaries of analyses that lent themselves to the effective and integral interpretation of story meaning. It is the belief of this author-researcher that in using the mode of narrative analysis one is compelled to take seriously the constructed as well as the free-flowing elements of the story discourse. Thus, in the process of analysing the interview data in this section, all efforts were made to highlight the recognizable patterns evident in the process of building a story. While at the same time, the research tools attempted to expose and explore the themes of symbolism, irony and deep meaning that emerged along the pathway of discovery.

In general terms, there are six kinds of knowledge topics that can be pursued in the interview process: facts, beliefs about facts, feelings and motives, standards of action,

²³⁹ Kvale, S. 1996. *Interviews – An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing*. London: SAGE Publications.

present and past behaviour, and conscious reasons.²⁴⁰ However, in order to manage the flow of data that came from the interview sessions, it was critical to choose a specific frame of reference that was utilized for the deconstruction of the narrative discourses that were gathered. The dominant structural narrative analysis frameworks are found in the works of Labov (1972), Gee (1986), and Burke (1945). Kohler Riessman summarises these three models of narrative analysis as follows:

1. **Labov's** model "includes six common elements: an abstract (summary of the substance of the narrative), orientation (time, place, situation, participants), complicating action (sequence of events), evaluation (significance and meaning of the action, attitude of the narrator), resolution (what finally happened), and coda (returns the perspective to the present)"²⁴¹.
2. **Gee's** model "analyzes changes in pitch, pauses, and other features that punctuate speech that allow interpreters to hear groups of lines together. Using poetic units, stanzas, and strophes to examine the talk... [Gee] shows how organized, coherent, and senseful...speech is."²⁴²
3. **Burke's** "classic method of analyzing language – dramatism...is contained in a pentad of terms: act, scene, agent, agency, purpose. Any complete statement about motives will offer some kind of answer to these five questions: What was done (act), when or where it was done (scene), who did it (agent), how he [or she] did it (agency), and why (purpose)."²⁴³

This study utilised the Burke framework of narrative analysis as the 'guiding questions' for unpacking the interviews. Thus, while the interview data contained large portions of free-flow scripts of the personal experience of violence in the Matabeleland conflict, the mode of analysis was guided by Burke's markers described above. The following questions assisted in teasing out Burke's paradigm:

- **Act:** This has to do with the *plot-formation* – What are the issues involving order, duration, frequency, causation and / or conflict embedded in the events and actions of the story?

²⁴⁰ Silverman, D. 2001. *Interpreting Qualitative Data – Methods for Analysing Talk, Text and Interaction*. London: SAGE Publications, 88.

²⁴¹ Kohler Riessman, 1993: 18-19.

²⁴² Kohler Riessman, 1993: 19.

²⁴³ *ibid.*

- **Scene:** This has to do with *settings* – What are the spatial, temporal and social dynamics surrounding the story?
- **Agent:** This has to do with the *characters* – How are the actors described? What is revealed about their points of view and traits? Do they draw out empathy, hatred or apathy?
- **Agency:** This has to do with *symbolism and irony* – What are the universal, historical, contextual or cultural threads that are used, articulated, manipulated and woven through the story in order to convey meaning?
- **Purpose:** This has to do with *narrative patterns* – What deeper meaning may be able to be unearthed in the structural composition of the narrative itself?²⁴⁴

Each interview narrative was broken down into manageable bits of script that were then categorised under the Burke rubric of analysis. In this way the research analysis findings were ‘thickened’ and yielded the narrative discourse cross-pollination necessary to shed new light on the questions surrounding the formation and interplay between the dominant and subjugated narratives surrounding the violence system in the Matabeleland case.

3.6. Narrative Analysis as Reflective of Political Theatre

“I attempt to illustrate a third, cultural ontology of war – the concept of war as a drama of social exclusion... War itself is a type of text – a violent attempt to ‘tell the story’ or to ‘cut in on the conversation’ of others from whose company the belligerents feel excluded.”²⁴⁵

In recent years, narrative analysis has given rise to the application of dramaturgical studies within the social sciences. This interdisciplinary study (socio-dramaturgy) combines knowledge from the performing arts with the study of social phenomena. In essence, dramaturgical studies propagate the idea that unfolding social activism can be compared to, and understood by applying the frames and processes that drive a theatrical performance.

These dramaturgical narrative lenses provided the overall ‘brushstrokes’ in which the Matabeleland conflict of the early 1980s was analysed. However, similar to the narrative story analysis, it was important that the dramaturgical analysis process be

²⁴⁴Powell, M. 1990. *What is Narrative Criticism?* Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 29-33.

²⁴⁵ Richards, P. 1996. *Fighting for the Rain Forest – War, Youth and Resources in Sierra Leone*. International Africa Institute: Oxford: Curry & New Hampshire: Heinemann Publishers, xxiv.

broken down into more manageable, specific frames of measurement. To accomplish this, the research turned to the work of Belinda Bozzoli²⁴⁶ who recently published on a dramaturgical approach to the political violence in South Africa. Bozzoli applies a grid-system of various stages required in the implementation of ‘political theatre.’ These stages are: Planning, Preparation, Scripting, Staging and Performance.²⁴⁷ The research data gathered concerning the Matabeleland conflict narratives was then scrutinised with these five stages of political theatricality in mind:

- *Planning:* What are the possible linkages that could be uncovered between the actual performance and the subsequent references to, or verbal evidence of an orchestrated violence that was unleashed on the communities of Matabeleland?
- *Preparation:* In the same vein, what patterns of action may be unearthed that reveal an association between the eventual performances of violence to the strategic planning that led up to its public presentation?
- *Scripting:* What scripts were used, and how were they communicated by the different actors in the Matabeleland conflict? Who played key roles in the conception and writing of these narrative scripts and what might the various ideological, political or psycho-social motivations have been?
- *Staging:* Who designed the stage settings and how were these spaces managed? Where was the staging arranged, and what was the significance of location? For example, Bozzoli²⁴⁸ and other interpreters of political theatre have often analysed the use of public spaces for protest (e.g. the ‘streets’, night vigils, protest funerals and political rallies and gatherings). What were the overall backdrops in these dramas? What were the symbolic props and costumes utilised (e.g. weapons, uniforms, posters, placards, t-shirts, hats, advertisements, poetry, and song) and how were they used in this theatrical story?
- *Performing:* What were the genre (broadly defined as patterns of narrative and imagery)²⁴⁹ of the performances? Examples of genre are tragedy, comedy,

²⁴⁶Bozzoli, B. 2004. *Theatres of Struggle and the End of Apartheid*. Ohio University Press.

²⁴⁷ Presentation by Bozzoli at University of Pretoria on *Nationalism and theatricality in the Alexandra Rebellion of 1986*. Chapter 9.

²⁴⁸ Bozzoli, 2004: Chapter 9.

²⁴⁹ Elliot, 2005: 47.

romance, satire, and horror or any given combination of these.²⁵⁰ How did the performances unfold? What were the primary themes and purported meanings of these dramatic enactments? What were the unexpected twists and turns in these dramatic scenarios? Who were the intended audiences and how did they respond to these various dramaturgical performances?

These five stages of political theatre provided the sign-posts for the narrative analysis that was generated from the data gathered in the literature review, document analysis and the open interviews. In the conclusion of the thesis, the inter-linkages of these historical performances to the current conflict rupture points in Zimbabwe today are highlighted.

3.7. Integrated Research Analysis Framework:

Literature Review	Document Analysis	Open Interviews	Overall Analysis
* Literary Criticism Lens	* Historical Criticism Lens	* Burke's Lens (Story Analysis)	* Dramaturgy Lens (Political Theatre)
CONTENT (Meaning)	<u>Guiding Questions:</u> * What is the nature of the socio-political climate in which this historical account is being recreated?	<u>Guiding Questions:</u> * Act – What are the issues involving order, duration, frequency, causation and / or conflict embedded in the events and actions of the story? * Scene – What are the spatial, temporal and social dynamics surrounding the story? * Agent – How are the actors described? What is revealed about their points of view and traits? Do they draw out empathy, hatred or apathy?	<u>Guiding Questions:</u> * Planning – What are the linkages between the actual performance and the subsequent references to, or verbal evidence of an orchestrated violence that was unleashed on the communities of Matabeleland? * Preparation – What 'patterns of action' may be unearthed that reveal an association between the eventual performances of violence to the strategic planning that led up to its public presentation? * Scripting – What scripts were used, and how were they communicated by the different actors in the Matabeleland conflict? * Staging – How were the spaces of violence
STRUCTURE (Form)	* What are the internal and external factors of influence that may be affecting the perceptions of the author(s) as they produce history? * What are the 'agendas' of historians?	* Agency – What are the universal, historical, contextual or cultural threads that are used, articulated, manipulated and	
	The student of historical analysis must not only ask		

²⁵⁰ Elliot, 2005: 127.

PERFORMANCE (Interaction)	questions of <i>what</i> (<i>subject matter</i>) and <i>when</i> (<i>dates and times</i>), but they must also ask the questions of <i>who</i> , <i>how</i> and <i>why</i> are people writing history.	woven through the story in order to convey meaning? * Purpose – What deeper meaning may be able to be unearthed in the content and composition of the narrative itself?	and protest arranged and managed? What was the significance of location? What were the symbolic ‘props’ & ‘costumes’ and how were they used? * Performing – What were the ‘genre’ of the performances? What were the unexpected “twists & turns” and the primary themes and purported meanings of these dramatic scenarios? Who were the intended audiences & how did they respond?
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3.8. Research Sample and Justification

3.8.1. Sample Choice - Sector Representation

As has been mentioned in the beginning of this document, the research sample choice was based on representation from eight sectors of society: politicians, ex-combatants, journalists, legal advocates, teachers, church leaders, women’s groups, rural agriculturalist populations. This cross-section of society was chosen because of their significance as the ‘publics’ (communities) who represented the primary protagonists in the context of the Matabeleland conflict of the 1980s. The following chart motivates the sample choice further:

Sector Representation:	Motivation for involvement in research study:
1.) Politicians, Government officials, and Traditional Leaders	This community could be argued to be the primary antagonists (masterminds) in this conflict drama – both ZAPU and ZANU representatives are assumed to carry the ‘official’ dominant and ‘unofficial’ subjugated counter-narratives that perpetuated the violence in Matabeleland. Traditional Leaders also embrace counter-narratives to the political status quo.
2.) Ex-combatants	This community could be argued to be the secondary antagonists in this conflict drama – both ZANLA and ZIPRA representatives will be sought out. Especially, significant are the narratives surrounding the fierce fighting that broke out between these two demobilisation camps in Entumbane in the city of Bulawayo. Also, critical to this discussion will be the rhetoric that swirled around the labels of ‘hero’ and ‘dissident’ that began to emerge in 1982.

3.) Journalists	This community represent the ‘messengers’ of the Matabeleland conflict narrative. However, their script is complicated by the degree of interference from the central government at the time. Perspectives from independent as well as state-sponsored media personnel will be solicited.
4.) Legal Advocates	This community represents two voices: those who carry the legal narratives that were interpreted in such a way as to justify the violence perpetrated by the government, and those legal activists who advocated for narratives of human rights and justice in the Matabeleland conflict.
5.) Teachers, Educators and Academics	This community appears to have been targeted in the Matabeleland violence by both sides to the conflict (both government forces & the supposed dissidents). Teachers were an important sector to manipulate into assisting in the re-education and or the ‘acted-out’ intimidation of the children. One of the ‘civil’ activities of the notorious 5 th Brigade was the controversial building of schools in Matabeleland.
6.) Church Leaders	Matabeleland as well as Zimbabwe as a whole is highly Christianized and churches have played prominent roles in development and community life of the society. While some church leaders chose to defend the actions of the central government at the time, many of the Church leaders played the role of activist and advocates for the cause of those communities who suffered under the violence in Matabeleland. It is the Catholic Church that authored the most detailed research report of the atrocities committed during the Matabeleland conflict era.
7.) Women Academics and Activists	The women of Matabeleland carry a script of victimisation in the drama of war – not only are they the community who feel the great loss of their men-folk (fathers, husbands, and sons) in the fighting, they also suffered under rape and loss of livelihoods as a result of violence. For the most part the women’s voice for peace and reconciliation has long been silenced or suppressed in Matabeleland for decades.
8.) Rural Agricultural Populations	This community consists of many of the primary and secondary victims of Gukurahundi as well as representing the seedbed for the political-ideological contestations over land.

While this representation of primary protagonists was not based on quantitative research findings, these were the categories of ‘actor-agents’ engaged in the conflict issues that emerged in the initial literature review and document analysis conducted by the researcher from that period of time. Also, these sectoral categories represented pivotal segments of society that carry the dominant or subjugated narratives of the time under

study. It is at these governmental and civil societal ‘points of reference’ where the creation, consumption, mediation and dissemination of narratives were promulgated.

3.8.2. Sample Selection Process – Purposive and Peer-Identified

The sample selection process for this research project was a two-fold strategy: purposive and peer-identified. **Purposive sampling** is the process whereby the “Researchers rely on their experience, ingenuity and/or previous research findings to deliberately obtain participants in such a manner that the sample obtained may be regarded as representative of the relevant population.”²⁵¹ In the context of this study, purposive sampling as opposed to random sampling is the chosen mode of sample selection for three reasons. Firstly, the researcher has been travelling and working (facilitating community conflict training and intervention) in Matabeleland region since 1995, and thus has a strong network of partners to draw from in this endeavour. Secondly, the researcher’s office and residence is located in Johannesburg, South Africa to which many Zimbabweans have immigrated since 2000. A portion of the research samples came out of the Zimbabwean Diaspora now located in South Africa. Thirdly, because of the current socio-political environment in Zimbabwe, there was a high level of suspicion around a research topic of this nature and therefore a considerable degree of non-participation. To explore a sensitive topic of this kind from within a volatile, politically charged setting one needed a high level of trust with those participating in the research.

In regards to **peer-identified sampling**, as the research progressed those who were interviewed recommended others to make contact with. Especially in regards to the interviews, the researcher relied on his already established contacts to direct him to further leads within the particular representational sectors identified.

3.8.3. Sample Size

The sample size for this research was 35 individual interviews in total. This sampling size is justified on three fronts:

²⁵¹ Huysamen, G.K. 2001. *Methodology for the Social and Behavioural Sciences*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 44.

- 1.) Most narrative analysis research samples are smaller in number than other research analysis modes with a wide range of 5-6 (units of life stories) to 25-30 (samples of interviews).
- 2.) The open interview format utilised in this research study was more in-depth than a structured interview arrangement.
- 3.) A substantial amount of data was gathered from the literature review and the document (textual) analysis conducted.

The following chart summarises the research sample and justification for this study:

Method & Sample Size:	Distribution of Sample Group:
1.) Literature Review <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2-year process • 300 book sources, 200 articles cited 	Scanned the fields of: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Social Conflict Theory 2. Narratology 3. Peace-building and Conflict Transformation
2.) Document Analysis Cross-cutting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1,000 pages, • 200 news clippings, • 4 video / DVD items 	Research drew from Zimbabwean newspaper archives, British Libraries & Archives, News Magazines, e-Newsletters, personal journals of persons living in Matabeleland, writings of Matabeleland political prisoners, recent victim's statements, political speeches, song lyrics, advertisements, and historical video/DVD footage.
3.) Open Interviews <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 35 open interviews between 2006 and 2008 • 4 Field Visits – 60 pages of field notes 	35 interviews in total representing the following sectors: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. politicians / government officials and traditional leaders (8 interviews), 2. ex-combatants (2 interviews), 3. journalists (3 interviews), 4. legal advocates (3 interviews), 5. teachers/educators/academics (6 interviews), 6. church leaders (6 interviews), and 7. women educators / activists (3 interviews) 8. rural agriculturalist populations (primary or secondary victims) – (4 interviews)

3.9. Research Validation and Reliability

“Oral sources...are not always reliable in point of fact. Rather than being a weakness, this is however, their strength: errors, inventions and myths lead us through and beyond facts to their meanings.”²⁵²

²⁵² Quote from Italian Researcher Portelli who completed an Oral History project in 1991 based on the murder of a young steel worker named Luigi Trastulli who was shot and killed by the police in 1949.

Finding clear guidelines on how to ensure the authenticity and integrity of qualitative research is a task of great contestation. This is due in part to the difficulty of dividing qualitative research into measurable units of analysis. It is also due to the very nature of qualitative research that often steps outside of the boundaries of formula and systematic predictions. Thus, in most situations of qualitative research the validation process needs to be ‘tailor-made’; uniquely designed in combination and flexibility to fit the measurement goals and objectives laid out in the original research proposal.

In dealing with verification of narrative analysis research, Reissman suggests that there are at least four legs that give stability to the stand of validation:

- 1.) Persuasiveness:** involves the plausibility degree to which any theoretical claims are substantiated by participants’ accounts and when alternative and/or comparative explanations for the data being studied are taken into account in the analysis.
- 2.) Correspondence:** has to do with the procedure of taking the research findings back to the communities being studied in order to secure what has been termed ‘member checks’,²⁵³ or participant review or feedback processes.
- 3.) Coherence:** Agar and Hobbs speak of three kinds of coherence cross-checks: global, local and themal.²⁵⁴ Global coherence refers to the overarching aims, intentions and meanings that emerge from the narrative research. Local refers to the particular ways, frames and mannerisms that the narrative discourse utilises to put forward its points of meaning. Themal has to do with the consistency of content configurations and the ability to integrate the strands of interpretation in a cogent whole.
- 4.) Pragmatic Use:** the extent to which one’s research is applied in praxis or becomes the basis for other people’s work.²⁵⁵

Having these foundational pillars of validity in the background, this study utilised four practical verification processes as the ‘yardstick’ for valid measurement of the accomplishments of this research effort.

²⁵³ Lincoln, Y.S. & Guba, E.G. 1985. *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: SAGE, 314.

²⁵⁴ Agar, M. & Hobbs, J.R. 1982. *Interpreting Discourse: Coherence and the Analysis of Ethnographic Interviews*. Discourse Processes, 5, 1-32.

²⁵⁵ Reissman, 1993: 65-69.

3.9.1. Research Instrument Piloting (audit)

The research interview protocol was tested on a group of masters and doctoral students (from Zimbabwe, DRC, Rwanda, Zambia and South Africa) studying at the Conflict Resolution and Peace Studies programme at University of Kwa-Zulu Natal in Durban, South Africa. Also, the researcher relied on a number of close Zimbabwean colleagues (Diaspora) who live in the greater Johannesburg area to provide feedback on the interview instrument. The choice to audit the research instrumentation in South Africa was for practical reasons, it was in close proximity of the researcher and his office and it was a much less expensive option than travelling to Zimbabwe to pilot the instruments. Following these pilot tests, some adjustments were made to the tool.

3.9.2. Reflexivity (Field Journal)

In line with the narrative research aims and objectives of this project, the researcher kept a running field journal for all data collection processes both locally and when travelling to Zimbabwe. This journal was utilised for personal reflection, to record particular details and critical pieces of story or narrative discourse, and to summarise book/journal or document readings. The field journal also provided a container to track the research learning along the way, as well as to capture any pivotal changes made to the research design as a result of unsuspected variables that arose in the midst of the data gathering activities. In essence, the field journal represented the narrative discourse of the researcher; a way of documenting or telling the story of the research journey.

3.9.3. Member Checking and Peer Review

As mentioned in the introductory paragraphs of this section on validation, one of the key assessment markers of qualitative research is **correspondence**. Correspondence can be defined as the evaluative ‘feedback loop’ of the analysis findings by the research participants themselves. This study has built in three expressions of member checking or peer review activities. Firstly, the transcribed data from the recorded interviews will be made available to any participant who requests a copy of them. This information was included in the introduction phase of the interview research instrument. Secondly, as the researcher has an on-going collegial relationship with a number of the interview sample, he has intentionally opened-up a dialogue around the validity and significance of the findings. It is believed that out of the research findings will come certain practical

applications and recommendations around narrative peace-building that will also be empowering and supportive to the research communities that took part in this initiative. Thirdly, a copy of the final passed thesis document is available to those participants who request it. All of these measures have provided sufficient ‘checks and balances’ to ensure a high degree of credibility from the research constituency itself.

3.9.4. Triangulation: Corroboration of Analysis Findings

The last critical ‘plumb-line’ of measurement utilised in monitoring this research project was the process of corroboration of analysis findings through triangulation. Triangulation refers to the comparative counter-reference of data analysis findings spanning two or more distinct methodologies of research but that are all testing the same thesis questions. Triangulation involves comparing different methods of research within and across quantitative or qualitative lines and instrumentalities. By conducting a combination of literature review, document analysis and interviews, this research project intended to maximise the opportunity to cross-tabulate data in order to confirm analysis findings and highlight analysis contradictions.

3.10. Ethical Considerations

The ethical concerns that require highlighting in this research endeavour revolved around two primary tensions. The first tension was related to the highly charged repressive socio-political context prevailing in Zimbabwe over this time. This tension multiplied a number of critical risk factors that could have endangered or at least greatly restricted the life and liberty of those who choose to participate in this research. To deal with this, each research participant was well-briefed on any security hazards that they may face in joining the research effort. In addition, voluntary consent was required from all participants confirming their awareness of all possible risks and waiving all rights to take legal action against the researcher in terms of any liabilities that may be the result of their participation in this project.

At the same time, the researcher made all efforts to provide a ‘safe space’ in which persons could participate in the research without inhibition or fear. This required constant safety ‘checks’ to be made with the local host organisations and participants that the researcher worked with. The researcher undertook to take decisive action to suspend any research proceedings where there was suspicion of Central Intelligence Officers

(CIOs) sent by the government to ‘spy’ and report back on the meeting content and attendance, or where immanent physical violence was threatened. Finally, would it have become too dangerous for either the researchers or the local constituent communities to continue with the research in the local context, this study would have continued its investigation by engaging the Zimbabwean Diaspora in South Africa as its primary research community.

The second ethical consideration was connected to the inter-subjectivity biases that can often arise between researcher and research participants. These subjectivity tensions can distort patterns of interactions and consequently the outcomes of the research can be compromised. All efforts were made to design methodological tools that would guard against some of these pitfalls. The combination of literature review, document analysis, and open interview processes was deliberately chosen to accommodate the narrative approach as well as to mitigate against researcher-researched subjectivity entanglements. From a narrative analysis position the concept of ‘pure’ objective research is a misnomer. Denying subjectivity in the research interface does not lend integrity to the process. Instead, it is the opinion of this author that the most honest posture of integrity for the researcher is that of naming and owning one’s own prejudices and biases upfront. In this way, the researcher’s story became ‘part and parcel’ of the whole narrative research flow; sometimes engaging with, sometimes critically dissecting, and sometimes carefully interpreting the story discourse of the chosen research communities.

Chapter 4: Ethnicity – Identity Narratives of the Shona and Ndebele

4.1. Introduction

*“You should hear what Ndebeles say about Shonas,
you should hear what Shonas say about Ndebeles.”²⁵⁶*

Human identity has multiple facets that determine and give meaning to the formation of individual and community awareness; including such identifiers as race, nationality, culture, language, religion, social and family roles, and educational or professional qualifications. However, for purposes of this research chapter those elements that shape *ethnic-identity*²⁵⁷ will be the focus of attention. Ethnic identity-forming narratives are stories that people tell in order to describe and explain *who* they are. These ethnic-identity stories are transmitted from generation to generation and most often function as a stabilising source; grounding the individual as ‘self-in-community’ with a sense of belonging and recognition.

Yet these same stories can also be motivated and fashioned by traumatic violence, historical bias, political machinations as well as the natural morphing of memories that become increasingly exaggerated with each subsequent ‘telling of the tale’. As ethnic-identity discourses imbibe a life of their own they contribute to the social construction of reality; producing either a positive or negative sets of outcomes. If they are acted on in a destructive manner, they quickly overshadow the perceptions of the current reality and an imbalance in socio-political relations ensues. This phenomenon of negative identity evolution is exemplified in the following transcriptions describing the contrasting views of the Ndebele-Shona ethnic divide as a result of the Matabeleland violence. From one Ndebele perspective:

“The whole conflict was a historical one. Shona speaking people have never forgiven the Ndebele for years of humiliation and domination through Lobengula and others. The fact that the Ndebele speaking people are perceived as foreigners, and the fact that for years – up to 1963 – the liberation struggle was dominated by Ndebele leadership in the person of Joshua Nkomo. There are historical reasons

²⁵⁶ Interview: SM1, Durban, South Africa – 07/03/07 – (Ndebele teacher, researcher and university lecturer).

²⁵⁷ This study intentionally uses the terms ‘ethnic/ethnicity’ in place of ‘tribe/tribalism’. While these words can and are often used interchangeably in circles of academia, reference to ‘tribal’ or ‘tribalism’ especially in the African context still carries derogatory connotations; reminiscent of the not-so-distant colonial past where phrases like ‘native’ and ‘tribal’ were laden with prejudicial intent meant to dehumanize the African.

why the majority has always had this sense that ‘we must sort out those people’, ‘we must get our own revenge’ ...”²⁵⁸

From one Shona perspective:

“I don’t think its something that really carries weight to the extent of wanting to influence the events of today. I don’t think it got as far as that, but in some circles you’ll find that those are just stories that are thrown around, if not to ridicule the people of Matabeleland, they are also used by some people to say ‘well, this is being used by Shona people to get back to Ndebele people because they are still bitter that we took their cattle or we took their women’ and things like that. But honestly speaking, I don’t think that it’s anything that can be used to interpret events of today or of the 1980s...”²⁵⁹

In the case of these two narratives, danger looms when the ethnic conflict story of the past is maximised (overshadows) or is minimised (disappears) in the unfolding story of present relational interactions and in so doing eliminates the shared or preferred future view of a meaningful co-existence among diverse ethnic groupings. To avoid distortion in the current reality, the narrative scripts of the *past* and the *future* must be integrated with an equitable and complimentary grip on the story of the *present*. Indeed, these ethnic identity-formation texts (both past and future) do influence and can transform present conflict stories for better or for worse.

The role of ‘ethnicity’ in the Matabeleland conflict is complex and nuanced. Accordingly, in certain corners ethnicity has been privileged as a central organizing factor in the analysis of the 1980s massacres. In other corners, the position of ethnicity has been relegated to a marginal, if not dismissive position in the scheme of the state-sanctioned violence that unravelled at that time. In short, there are three categories of theories that attempt to explain the prominent, yet contested role that ethnicity has played in the Gukurahundi disturbances of Matabeleland in the early 1980s.

First, there is the idea of ethnicity as a *functional instrument* utilized to attain political recognition and status. Proponents of this theory would argue that the ethnic division plaguing Zimbabwe today did not exist in the past and that it was contrived by opportunistic politicians who played the issue of ‘ethnicity card’ as an effective tool of

²⁵⁸ Yap, K. 2001. *Uprooting the Weeds – Power, Ethnicity and Violence in the Matabeleland Conflict 1980-1987*. Stockholm: Elanders Novum, 276 – (An excerpt taken from an interview conducted by the author, K. Yap with Paul Themba Nyathi, Director of Zimbabwe Project, Harare, 1 December 1993).

²⁵⁹ Interview: SD1, Johannesburg, South Africa - 18/08/06 – (Shona Human Rights Lawyer).

mobilization assisting them in the solidification of their power, the silencing of their opposition, and the justification of heinous acts of violence.

“It has come to be understood in this country that that’s how we have used ‘tribe’. Not for tribe’s sake...let us go further and say ‘tribe for what?’ That’s the question. Power, it’s all about power - everything must be reduced to one word – power and probably wealth because power begets wealth.”²⁶⁰

“I think the whole thing to my understanding was basically mostly contorted as tribal...I hesitate to say ‘tribal’...but I think it was tribal yet at the same time...I understand the tactics that Robert Mugabe was using, you know, in as far as achieving his own political [ends]. Yes, it was manipulated tribalism, if I can put it that way, or tribalistic wars.”²⁶¹

“I strongly believe it’s the politicians that deliberately divided us or make us aware that we come from two different major tribal groups. Like in our suburbs here, a number of my neighbours are Shona-speaking, I’m Ndebele-speaking. We relate very well, we share salt, we share sugar; I go away and leave my keys to my house to my neighbour. They go out and tell me they are going out for so many weeks – ‘you are in charge’. They have weddings, they involve us...But it’s only when the politicians comes that we suddenly realise ‘I come from a different tribal group; they come from a different tribal group.’”²⁶²

Second, a contrasting notion purports that actual, *ancient ethnic animosities* have existed for over one hundred years now and that these bitter generational grudges were duly aroused, surfaced and heightened by the unfolding political events of violent power-struggle in the liberation movement and the subsequent independence period from 1980 to the present. This ethnic-conflict view insists that there is an ingrained historic incompatibility (albeit it somewhat inexplicable) between Ndebele and Shona that dates back to pre-colonial times.

“...for me when I go back and look at it and read about it – it’s not different from the genocide in Rwanda. It was some kind of attempt at ethnic cleansing. So that’s the issue. I think it goes back to...it probably goes back to the 1800s.”²⁶³

“...and I believe that even to this day, ZANU-PF believes that the Matabeleland people are a nuisance in Zimbabwe. But let me go back to the origins of this

²⁶⁰ Interview: PN1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 30/03/07 – (Ndebele historian, author, researcher and archivist).

²⁶¹ Interview: DN3, Johannesburg, South Africa – 30/10/07 – (Ndebele NGO worker facilitating trauma healing and reconciliation among rural Matabeleland communities and survivors of Gukurahundi violence).

²⁶² Interview: AN1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 12/09/07 – (Ndebele Church Leader and Peace activist).

²⁶³ Interview: DL1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 11/08/06 - (Ndebele Journalist employed as a business editor for a prominent newspaper).

brutality, this animosity...I think during the course of the struggle it was never made clear that Mashonaland and Matabeleland which made Rhodesia then, Southern Rhodesia if you want to call it that – were never one country. And whilst the people were busy, the two forces fighting, they never really emphasized the fact that we are dealing with a pre-colonial era where there are two states and that they didn't really reconcile the facts of history. So when Mugabe came to power, he was aware that in Matabeleland he had no mandate to rule them; they were supposed to resort back to their pre-colonial era status and govern themselves.”²⁶⁴

Third, there is the conception of *natural ethnic cleavages* that exhibited along the lines of geographical location (Mashonaland / Matabeleland) and political party affiliation (ZAPU / ZANU). These ‘natural’ ethnic fault-lines are not perceived to be instinctual or intentionally constructed and as such could be understood to be neutral. However, they were capitalized on and accentuated for socio-political and economic gain leading up to and throughout the Matabeleland conflict.

“Unfortunately there was the overlap between the political party and the ethnic group. It wasn't an absolute overlap because there were Shona people who supported ZAPU leaders. But that is the problem that many people saw it in ethnic terms rather than on political ideological terms. In other words they didn't see that Mugabe's intention was to establish a one-party state, they saw it as the intention being to try to wipe-out Ndebeles.”²⁶⁵

“It's very unfortunate that the events of the 1980s took place in the Matabeleland and the Midlands province, which happened to be a place which was predominately occupied by people of a particular ethnicity. But if you want to read too much into that...to want to label it or want to equate it to an ‘ethnic cleansing’, I think to my knowledge it is far-fetched. I wouldn't want to add too much into that. I think that the...at that particular time, the majority of the people who then were in ZIPRA – were from the Matabeleland region and even when the destabilization took place – that is the place that they retreated to.”²⁶⁶

To this end, it matters little which theory one may gravitate towards to explain the ethnic quagmire emanating from the Matabeleland massacres, *the resultant outcome has been the production of a narrative of conflicting identities whereby the Ndebele and Shona populations are imagined to be irreconcilable.*

²⁶⁴ Interview: CM1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 29/03/07 - (Ndebele Traditionalist and Cultural Activist advocating for a separate Ndebele nation).

²⁶⁵ Interview: DC1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe - 13/09/07 (White Zimbabwean Human Rights Lawyer and politician).

²⁶⁶ Interview: SD1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 18/08/06 – (Shona Human Rights Lawyer).

The ethnic-based conflict narratives that surround the Matabeleland massacres are nested in four primary historical contexts: the pre-colonial era; the colonial period; the liberation struggle years; and the state-sanctioned Gukurahundi violence of the early 1980s. Within each of these time periods certain salient themes have emerged pertaining to, and fuelling the discourse of ethnic relations in Zimbabwe. The recounting of pre-colonial history surrounding Shona-Ndebele relations has reinforced a divisive mentality of clear ethnic distinction between the *offended* and the *offender*. Capitalising on these apparent fissures, the colonial rule appropriated its empirical agenda by enforcing certain racial and ethnic prejudices which laid the foundation for a clear policy of *splinter* and *subdue* along tribal delineations. At the onset of the Zimbabwean liberation struggle a season of reprieve from ethno-politics surfaced with Shona and Ndebele linking together in pursuit of independence from white colonial rule. However, this unification was short-lived when the liberation movement experienced a number of tragic *internal divisions* with each subsequent formation bolstering their support base along the edges of ethno-geographical demarcations. Finally, under the siege of the Operation Gukurahundi the *fatal fusion* between narratives of ethnic hatred and narratives of traumatic violence was solidified as a predominantly Shona-speaking Fifth Brigade unleashed a reign of terror on a primarily Ndebele-speaking civilian population residing in the Matabeleland region.

4.2. Ethnicity: pre-Colonial Era – Narratives of ‘Victor and Vanquished’

In reference to social psychologist Vamik Volkan’s pivotal work on the phenomena of “chosen traumas and chosen glories”²⁶⁷ on the psyche of a nation, this section on pre-colonial narratives explores the emergence of ethnically assigned scripts of ‘*victor and vanquished*’ between the Ndebele and the Shona. By weaving together historical accounts, selective memories and dominating myths, this research highlights the propensity of both ethnic groups to locate their identity in texts that validate their sense of being the ‘offended’ (Shona) or their justified rationalization for being the ‘offender’ (Ndebele). However, the research transcriptions also reveal the complications and intricacies inherent in attempts to compartmentalize these categories of perpetrator

²⁶⁷ Volkan, V. 1994. *The Need to have Enemies & Allies – From Clinical Practice to International Relations*. New Jersey and London: Jason Aronson Inc. Here Volkan refers to the magnification of a nation’s historical biography where certain events of humiliation or triumph become ‘larger-than-life’; locked in the minds of the citizenry and creating myths of heroes and enemies that shape that nation’s laws and policies, institutions and structures, and its corporate character.

and victim along ethnic fissures. Additionally, this study illuminates the ironic ‘ebb and flow’ of historic agency as both Ndebele and Shona actors perform the dual roles of aggressor and aggrieved; sometimes consecutively and other times congruently. This paradoxical dance of ‘aggression-victimisation’ flows in a cyclical fashion infusing the thinking and behaviour of one generation to the next.

4.2.1. Stories of Shona Origins

The Bantu descendents of the modern day Shona people²⁶⁸ are believed to have migrated into what is now central Zimbabwe (between the Zambezi and Limpopo rivers) sometime between 300-1000 A.D.²⁶⁹ While not much is known about this time period, the Shona populations that inhabited the area are frequently described as co-existing peacefully in small extended familial clans, with informal governance structures, and organised around informal formations of feudalism. Eliakim Sibanda characterizes the Shona living in that time as follows: “...[the] AmaShona people lived as decentralized agriculturally based chiefdoms.”²⁷⁰

These extrapolations of the Shona’s early existence have led to a number of contested historical interpretations of this era. For some historians this period of time has been ‘glorified’ in an attempt to paint the ethno-cultural and political ‘roots’ of the Shona people as pure; almost pristine in nature. David Chanaiwa defends the ancient Shona culture as a peace-loving, egalitarian network of villages’ cohabitating in harmony without the use of violence and war.²⁷¹ However, most socio-historians and anthropologists alike would classify these Shona populations in conjunction with any other agrarian subsistence groupings (herders, hunters and gatherers) dwelling in that same developmental timeframe (the Iron Age). This would include the natural, inevitable

²⁶⁸ The identity delineation of ‘Shona’ as a homogeneous ethnic grouping is a relatively contemporary label that encompasses a range of historically distinct ethnic groupings including the Korekore, Zezuru, Manyika, Ndau, Rozvi, Kalanga, and Karanga who now share the common language of modern-day Shona.

²⁶⁹ *Great Zimbabwe*. Retrieved from the web 19/02/09. <http://www.dmbinns.com/zimbabwe.htm>

²⁷⁰ Sibanda, E. 2004. *The Zimbabwe African People’s Union, 1961-87 – A Political History of Insurgency in Southern Rhodesia*. New Jersey: Africa World Press, 12.

²⁷¹ Chanaiwa, D. 1976. “The Army and Politics in Pre-Industrial Africa: The Ndebele Nation, 1822-1893”. *African Studies Review*, 19 (2): 53.

tendency toward inter-group feuding and conflict clashes over competition for essential forms of livelihoods.²⁷²

Between the 11th to 15th Century A. D., a trading centre called Mapungubwe located on the banks of the Limpopo River expanded into what was called the ‘Great Zimbabwe’ which translated in Shona means ‘houses of stone’²⁷³. By the 13th Century the Great Zimbabwe (a series of chieftaincy dwellings dotting over 100 hilltops), became the dominant power in the region; its Kingdom extending to cover the Limpopo and Zambezi basins.²⁷⁴ This Shona ascendancy to power is accredited to two prominent theories. The first is tied to a religious system (ancestral cult) that held a strong sway over the ordinary people who were required to perform mining labour services and a complex set of sacrifices to appease the ancestors in exchange for tributes of ivory and gold granted from the Chieftains storehouses of wealth. The second theory is linked to the exponential increase in trading business and subsequent wealth accumulation that occurred among the Shona over that time period as the Arab trade routes became an established network throughout the inland river ways of the region.²⁷⁵ According to Martin and Johnson (1981), “...considerable quantities of gold had been mined and exported from the area.”²⁷⁶

One of the most controversial narrative debates of this pre-colonial epoch revolved around the origins of the Great Zimbabwe ruins. The first European explorers to visit the ruins were the Portuguese in the early 16th century. Following that various British colonists and hunters rediscovered the ruins; Adam Renders in 1867 and Karl Mauch in 1871. Archaeologist, J. Theodore Bent published a book on *The Ruined Cities of Mashonaland* in 1891. Unable to deviate from the racial evolutionist worldview of the white colonial mind-set, all of these figures promulgated the theory that the Great Zimbabwe must have been built by outsiders, not those of Bantu ascent. Bent believed

²⁷² Fagan, B.M. 1997. The Zambezi and Limpopo Basins 1100-1500, in Ki-Zerbo J. and Niane, D.T. (eds) *General History of Africa – IV- Africa from the Twelfth to the Sixteenth Century*, Paris, France: UNESCO, James Curry, University of California Press, 209-11.

²⁷³ Fagan, B.M. 1997: 213-218.

²⁷⁴ *History of Zimbabwe – Mapungubwe and Great Zimbabwe: 11th - 15th century AD*. Retrieved from the web 19/02/09. <http://www.historyworld.net/textonly/printpg.asp?type=histories&nid=ad28&pcount=4>

²⁷⁵ Fagan, B.M. 1997: 212-13.

²⁷⁶ Martin, D & Johnson, P. 1981. *The Struggle for Zimbabwe*. Johannesburg: Raven Press, 36.

“that the ruins revealed either the Phoenicians or the Arabs as builders”²⁷⁷, and “Mauch favoured a legend that the structures were built to replicate the palace of the Queen of Sheba in Jerusalem.”²⁷⁸ The first scientific archaeological excavations were embarked on in 1905-06 by David Randall-MacIver and later in 1929 by Gertrude Caton-Thompson at which time, aided by the use of radiocarbon dating, the Great Zimbabwe ruins were finally proven to be the handiwork of the Bantu peoples of that time:

“The famous Great Zimbabwe ruins near the modern town of Masvingo have fuelled the sometimes extravagant imagination of writers who sought its origin outside Africa. The reality is that it was an essentially African development, built of local raw materials and according to age-old architectural principles.”²⁷⁹

“Portugal’s tenuous hold on the area was broken at the end of the century by the expanding Shona Empire of the Rozwi Mambos who developed a complex and stable political and economic system, permanent evidence of its great sophistication being the stone structures around the country, including Great Zimbabwe.”²⁸⁰

For political purposes, the Great Zimbabwe represented a pivotal Bantu people’s accomplishment and was celebrated as a dynastic showcase of critical significance to the advanced governance and economic prowess of the Shona Empire: “To black anti-colonialist groups, Great Zimbabwe became an important symbol of achievement by black Africans. Reclaiming its history was a major aim for those wanting independence.”²⁸¹ Not only were these ruins proof of African ‘civilisation’ in the face of white colonial racism, but in the competitive ethnic relationships between the Ndebele and the Shona, *Great Zimbabwe became a ‘trump card’ for Shona triumphalism (proof of past nationhood and ‘empire building’) in the face of the Ndebele domination to come.* By the 15th Century, the Great Zimbabwe diminished in stature and magnificence as its towering stone structures were abandoned and left for ruin. Cascading from the fall of the Great Zimbabwe, the Shona established a number of other less potent conflicting state

²⁷⁷ *Great Zimbabwe National Monument – History of Research. Retrieved from the web 09/03/09.*
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Zimbabwe, 2. See endnote No. 3: “Vast Ruins in South Africa – The Ruined Cities of Mashonaland”. *The New York Times*. p.19. 1892-12-18.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Fagan, B.M. 1997: 212.

²⁸⁰ Martin, D & Johnson, P. 1981: 37. See also Ranger, T. 1967. *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia 1896-97*. London: Heinemann.

²⁸¹ *Great Zimbabwe National Monument – Political Implications. Retrieved from the web 09/03/09.*
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Zimbabwe, 4.

formations arising from the clans of the powerful Rozvi (Mambos); the more prominent states being the Mwenemutapa, the Torwa and the Changamire.²⁸²

Explanations for the demise of Shona 'empire' remain a mystery to historians even up to the present. Some experts explain this fall of the Great Zimbabwe as a result of the migration of its chiefs and their inhabitants in search of unspoiled grazing and non-depleted woodlands.²⁸³ Other historians would point to the destructive influence of European settlers (Portuguese followed by the British) who through deception and violent force overtook trading routes, mining rights, and most of the land leaving the Africans to eek out a bleak existence in reservations, functioning as cheap labour to the colonial masters.²⁸⁴ Still others account for this decline as a result of the '*Umfecane*'; the marauding, unruly bands of Zulu renegades under the leadership of Shoshangane, Zwangendaba and Nxaba who raided and pillaged in waves across the Zambezi plains from the 1820s until they eventually fought against each other in 1831 and thereafter scattered before the arrival of Mzilikazi in 1837.²⁸⁵ Curiously, these roving Zulu offshoots were not the only migratory raiders in search of land, cattle and other goods; various Shona clans also participated in the piracy and looting that spread across the region in the 18th Century. According to AmaShona expert and historian, David Beach:

“The eighteenth century Shona were beginning to pay more attention to raiding and warfare as a means of making a living. There was a definite increase in the level of violence in society, and the Rozvi of the late seventeenth century were soon to be joined by the Nyai bands of the Mugapa, the bands of Chikunda in the lower Zambezi Valley, the raiding Heya of the 1760s...”²⁸⁶

The fact that there was wide-spread engagement in migratory raiding in the 18th Century by *different* regional ethnic groups is important to note, as it assists in 'thickening the plot' of historic Ndebele-Shona relations by deconstructing the narrative myth that only *one* particular ethnic group (Ndebele) exercised this form of violence over the other (Shona). This issue of raiding will be discussed in more detail further on in this Chapter.

²⁸² Sibanda, E. 2004: 12.

²⁸³ Fagan, B.M. 1997: 218.

²⁸⁴ Martin, D & Johnson, P. 1981: 37.

²⁸⁵ Sibanda, E. 2004: 13.

²⁸⁶ Beach, D.N. 1980. *The Shona and Zimbabwe 900-1850: An Outline of Shona History*. New York: Africana Publishing Company, 320.

4.2.2. Stories of Ndebele Origins

This section will concentrate on the narratives describing the more recent pre-colonial history and the arrival of the Ndebele ‘nation’ to settle in Southern Zimbabwe under the kingships of Mzilikazi (1820-1868) and his son and heir to the throne Lobengula (1870-1893). In 1821, after a falling out with all-powerful King Shaka of the Zulu nation (located in what is now Kwa-Zulu Natal Province, South Africa), one of Shaka’s key generals, Mzilikazi (also spelled ‘umziligazi’) broke away and travelled northward with his band of followers (approximately 300 persons of the Khumalo clan) eventually settling in an area that is believed to be the Northwest Province (former Transvaal, South Africa). It was in this location that Mzilikazi is believed to have started his *incorporation plan* (either by force and/or through voluntary repatriation) in which he grafted in other ethnic groups, notably the Sotho and Tswana into his Ndebele Nation.

In 1837, Mzilikazi and his people found themselves at war with the Boers²⁸⁷ who had set out on their ‘Great Trek’ (Vortrekker) from the Cape Region seeking release and refuge from what they perceived as the tyranny of British rule. To avoid further war and to escape continued bloodshed, Mzilikazi then migrated into Southern Zimbabwe and there established the Matabeleland Kingdom by 1840.²⁸⁸

The Ndebele kingdom maintained a dominant rule in the region under King Mzilikazi and his successor and son King Lobengula until his defeat at the hands of the British in 1893. The Kingdom of Matabeleland was established through tactics of *volunteer assimilation*, *coerced integration* and an *extensive taxation system* levied against Shona chieftaincies. The Ndebele kingdom (traditionally referred to as uMthwakazi²⁸⁹) was actually a conglomerate of many different ethnic groups²⁹⁰ bound together by a dominant language, customs and governance structures:

²⁸⁷ The ‘Boers’ refers to white Afrikaaner farmers of Dutch descent who first arrived in the Cape in 1652.

²⁸⁸ Glass, S. 1968. *The Matabele War*, London and Harlow: Longmans, Green and Co Ltd, 1.

²⁸⁹ The meaning of ‘uMthwakazi’ is uncertain. It seems to have originated from the word ‘Ababuthwakzi’ which describes the ‘massiveness’ of the size of the nation. (Taken from a paper presented by Royal Prince Peter Zwibe Khumalo entitled, ‘Background on Local Cultures’ at the Bulawayo Agenda Conference on Ethnicity, 30/06/06). Other scholars suggest it may have its genesis from the Ndebele word ‘uMutwa’ which is the name for the San peoples who are the original inhabitants of Southern Africa. See Nyathi, P. 1994. *Igugu LikaMthwakazi: Imbali YamaNdebele, 1820-1893*. Gweru: Mambo Press.

²⁹⁰ Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S. 2008. “Nation Building in Zimbabwe and the Challenges of Ndebele Particularism.” *African Journal on Conflict Resolution*, 8 (3):35. Accordingly, the Matabeleland nation

“We are a nation, we are not a tribe - we are made of over ten different ethnic groups. We are a nation created by King Mzilikazi, we are Mthwakazi, we have our own way of life, we have a culture, we have a very clear history in this country, and we want government to recognize things like that and accept that those belong to us as those relate to ‘ubuntu’ or what we call humanity, and we do not want those to be interfered with.”²⁹¹

“And the state of Mthwakazi of Matabeleland was created by all our ancestry even in...in agreement, in liaison, because you’ll [find] the Venda, the Sotho, the Kalanga, the Tsonga, whatever – had their own input in creating this state of Matabeleland. That is the reason why you’ll find we still co-exist today. We know so-and-so is Nguni, so-and-so is Tonga, so-and-so is Venda, and so on but – those differences don’t really matter to us – we know as a nation we are all Matabeleland and nobody has really imposed that on us.”²⁹²

For the Ndebele people, the identification of being *one* nation but consisting of *many* ethnic variations is a source of paramount pride. The above quoted speakers seem to believe that there is a unified, collective consciousness of what it means to be ‘Ndebele’ that is shared by all its members and has emerged voluntarily, not because of imposition.

“In all instances force was not a priority action. Where it was used it was designed to align behaviour to facilitate integration into the Nguni group...On the Zimbabwe side King Mzilikazi met minimum resistance and the integration was a diplomatic process based on persuasion and recognition of the local people’s religion.”²⁹³

However, the Ndebele kingdom may not have been as gloriously unified as is often portrayed in history. In his fascinating study of the internal sub-divisions within seemingly unified Ndebele Nation, Bjorn Lindgren makes the case that the Ndebele ethnic identity, far from being uniform is layered with a complex social ranking system that clearly places certain internal Ndebele groupings into certain class categories. Lindgren extrapolates on the three classifications of clan names (*izibongo*) in the Ndebele culture that connote a separate position or ‘caste’ order within the socio-economic web of

was known to have incorporated persons from Nguni, Sotho, Shona, Kalanga, Tonga, Tswana, Venda and Lozwi extraction.

²⁹¹ Interview: PK1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 30/03/07 - (A prominent member of the Ndebele Royal Family).

²⁹² Interview: CM1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 29/03/07 - (Ndebele Traditionalist and Cultural Activist advocating for a separate Ndebele nation).

²⁹³ Khumalo, P.Z. 2006. *Background on Local Cultures* – An unpublished paper presented at the Bulawayo Agenda Conference on Ethnicity, Holiday Inn – Bulawayo, 30/06/06, 3.

intra-clan relationships. According to Lindgren the *Zansi* represent royalty, the *Enhla* represent other incorporated tribes, and the *Lozwi/Holi* represents the slave or servant class²⁹⁴. Royal Prince Khumalo disagrees with the notion of ‘caste’ and prefers to describe this asymmetrical stratification of people as necessary ‘social order’:

“Once they joined Mzilikazi the conquered fitted into a structure based on status; Abezanzi, Abenhla and Amahole. At the time it was used it had no derogatory implications but it has been greatly abused by some of us who are bent on destroying this magnanimous Nation.”²⁹⁵

Like Khumalo, Professor Ndlovu-Gatsheni also disagrees with Lindgren’s ‘caste’ analysis, but for different reasons. Ndlovu-Gatsheni suggests that Lindgren has been overly simplistic in his assumptions of a ‘ranking system’ as opposed to a ‘geographical’ categorization of the various Ndebele ethnic branches:

“The discourse of castes just like that of *izibongo* ignores historical factors of social fluidities within the Ndebele state. For instance, the term *Zansi* literally meant the South in geographic sense while *Enhla* literally means the North. It also denotes direction. But *Lozwi* is a form of ethnic identity of a branch of Shona people who belonged to the Rozvi state that dominated the south-western part of the Zimbabwean plateau prior to the arrival of the Ndebele.”²⁹⁶

Ndlovu-Gatsheni continues by identifying at least four versions of Ndebele identity. The first being restricted to those direct descendents of the Khumalo clan (the ruling elite), which would reduce the Ndebele kingdom to a small handful of Nguni clans. The second identity demarcation revolves around linguistic commonalities; meaning all who speak Ndebele as the mother tongue. The third version of Ndebele identification has geographical connotations as represented in anyone living in Matabeleland or the Midlands regions. The fourth and broadest attempt at defining the Ndebele nation opens the boundaries to be inclusive of all ethnic people groups (ten or more already mentioned) that amalgamated into the Ndebele (Mthwakazi) Nation over time. The fifth and more recent Ndebele nationalist identity was a projection of the nationalist project after independence in which Ndebele and ZAPU as a political entity became synonymous. Finally, the sixth and maybe most lethal of all identifications came as a

²⁹⁴ Lindgren, B. 2004. “The Internal Dynamics of Ethnicity: Clan Names, Origins and Castes in Southern Zimbabwe”. *Africa*, 74 (2):177-179.

²⁹⁵ Khumalo, P.Z. 2006: 3.

²⁹⁶ Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S. 2008: 34.

result of the Gukuranhundi violence where the Ndebele and the ‘dissident’ (counter-revolutionary) became twinned together.²⁹⁷ The latter two identifications will be discussed in more detail in Chapter five (on Nationalism) and Chapter six (on Loyalty) of this study. *All of these versions of Ndebele identity serve to complicate what it currently means to ‘be’ Ndebele thereby debunking the over-simplistic notion that the Matabeleland violence was the symptomatic display of a bifurcated ethnic-essentialist conflict between ‘Ndebele’ on one side and ‘Shona’ on the other.*

Despite these careful attempts to demystify and increase the complex variation around the context of ethnic conflicts in Matabeleland, pre-colonial history has produced a meta-narrative defined by a highly antagonistic relationship between the general groupings of Ndebele and Shona. This distorted interaction often only allows two voices to speak, two echoes to be heard across the chasm of the canyon of ethnic conflict; that of the ‘offended’ Shona and the justified ‘offender’ Ndebele.

4.2.3. Narratives of Shona as ‘Offended’

The dominant Shona narrative arising out of this epoch in history resounds with the voice of the *offended*; those who have been living under forced oppression or who have been invaded and overwhelmed by a foreign or alien force (the Ndebele ‘offender’). A cursory review of popular historical scripts²⁹⁸ describing this time period reinforces this sense of the Shona being the subjugated people:

“In the nineteenth century, the Shona were disturbed by Nguni migrations from the south, particularly by the Ndebele who, possessing superior military techniques, settled in and dominated the southeast of what is now Zimbabwe.”²⁹⁹

“In 1834, the Ndebele people arrived while fleeing from the Zulu leader Shaka, making the area their new empire, Matabeleland. In 1837-38, the Shona were conquered by the Ndebele, who arrived from south of the Limpopo and forced them to pay tribute and concentrate in northern Zimbabwe.”³⁰⁰

“The Shona confederation gradually disintegrated, and Zimbabwe was abandoned. During the 1830s, another Bantu people, the Ndebele, conquered and

²⁹⁷ Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S. 2008: 35.

²⁹⁸ The use of internet web referencing in this section is not to indicate accuracy per se, but instead to expose the kind of populist history that legend is made of.

²⁹⁹ *Shona – History and Cultural Relations*. Retrieved from the web 19/02/09.

<http://www.everyculture.com/Africa-Middle-East/Shona-History-and-Cultural-Relations.html>

³⁰⁰ *Zimbabwe*. Retrieved from the web 19/02/09. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zimbabwe#cite_note-revolts-10

settled the western half of the region and began exacting tribute from the Shona of the eastern half.”³⁰¹

“As warriors and cattle-breeders the Ndebele easily subdued the agricultural Shona, long resident in the region.”³⁰²

Literarily loaded wording such as the Ndebele ‘possessing a superior military’, and the Shona “disintegrated’, ‘abandoned’, ‘forced to pay tribute’, and having been ‘conquered’ and ‘subdued’ only served to accentuate the Ndebele as *victor* on the one hand and the Shona as *vanquished* on the other. Present-day Ndebele patriots have attempted to solidify this position of power by describing the historic Shona in condescending and derogatory terms such as disorganized, demilitarised and not unified as an ethnic or national entity. Whereby, the Shona are then cast as a people group that is easily conquerable and vulnerable to manipulation by external forces. This view is accentuated in the following transcripts:

“Do you know, when Mzilikazi came here, Mzilikazi had a regiment. Regiments are soldiers, well-trained people. But that side [Shona] they had no chiefs, they had no commanders, they only had Inyangas only. But here in Matabeleland, the chief, the commanders of the battalions, in fact Mzilikazi – everyone well organized and well disciplined, but that side [Shona]...totally nothing.”³⁰³

“...I don’t mean to insult them but as a fact, I believe this...whether one calls it a nation or a group called Shona, is something that was created by the Colonizers as late as 1930. Because I recall reading through history that around 1927-1928 the colonial masters then said, ‘Look, people in Matabeleland, we found them as a nation – Matabele or Mtwakazi; but these people up here we don’t know what to call them’. They had to institute a commission to come up with suggestions as to what to call these various groups of people that lived up there, up until 1930 where they agreed to call them ‘Shonas’. And by so saying I don’t mean to insult them...”³⁰⁴

While it is clear that the delineation of ‘Shona’ came into existence relatively recently in historical terms, research refutes the above distortion of the origins of the Shona ethnic label by dating its initial evidences of usage almost 100 years earlier: “The

³⁰¹ *History of Zimbabwe*. Retrieved from the web 19/02/09. <http://history.howstuffworks.com/african-history/history-of-zimbabwe.htm>

³⁰² *History of Zimbabwe – Mapungubwe and Great Zimbabwe: 11th - 15th century AD*. Retrieved from the web 19/02/09. <http://www.historyworld.net/textonly/printpg.asp?type=histories&nid=ad28&pcount=4>

³⁰³ Interview: AN2, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 12/09/07 – (Ndebele Ex-ZIPRA Soldier).

³⁰⁴ Interview: CM1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 29/03/07 – (Ndebele Traditionalist and Cultural Activist advocating for a separate Ndebele nation).

term Shona first appeared in writing in 1835 according to David Beach...³⁰⁵ Bjorn Lindgren occupies considerable time in discussing the origins of the ‘Shona’ identification which is historically an *isiZulu* verb that was used by Mzilikazi and his followers to label those people that they had defeated. The term Shona can be translated as ‘sink’, ‘go down’, ‘go out of sight’, ‘disappear’, ‘setting of sun’, moon going down’, ‘die’, ‘lose heavily’, ‘become poor’, ‘bankrupt’ or ‘ruined’.³⁰⁶ This interpretation of the Shona term was summarised in the following interview transcription:

“Yes, it can be interpreted that way. But I don’t know whether it originated with Ndebeles. Otherwise, the Ndebeles have called them ‘AmaChona’, which ‘Chona’ is to go down...I mean Ndebeles would say ‘AmaChona’, and then they are just looking down upon them.”³⁰⁷

Thus, those Ndebele who inherited a Shona-origin name were prejudiced against as part of the lowest caste (*Lowzi/Holi*) and often took great strides to try to distance themselves from this Shona identification.³⁰⁸

4.2.4. Narratives of Ndebele as justified ‘Offender’

The dominant Ndebele narrative emanating from this historical period speaks from the voice of the rationalized and justified *offender*; a proud and established Kingdom that successfully assimilated many disparate ethnic groupings including some Shona (the *offended*) living in their resettled territories. The kidnapping of young Shona men is explained as recruitment for their advanced army structure and the abduction of Shona women is justified as necessary to provide wives for the newly recruited Shona soldiers. Likewise, the raiding of cattle is dismissed as a cultural misunderstanding whereby the Ndebele King had ownership of all property of his subjects, including cattle. The apparent reality that there was little known or recorded rebellion of Shona peoples

³⁰⁵ MacGonagle, E. 2007. *Crafting Identity in Zimbabwe and Mozambique*. UK: University of Rochester Press, 118 (Endnote No. 27). See also Beach, D. 1983. The Zimbabwe Plateau and It’s Peoples, in Birmingham, D. and Martin, P. (eds.) *History of Central Africa*, Vol.1, New York: Longman, 268.

³⁰⁶ Lindgren, B. 2004: 173 (see footnote No.1).

³⁰⁷ Interview: FN1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 26/10/07 – (Ndebele Finance Manager and former employee of the ZANU-PF Ministry of Finance and the National Oil Company of Zimbabwe in the early 1980s.)

³⁰⁸ Mamdani, M. 2001. *When Victims become Killers – Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 41-76. Mamdani develops the conception of ethnic identity labels being historical productions of socio-political construction especially as it relates to the linguistic origins of the word ‘Hutu’ which means ‘servant’, ‘slave’ or referring to a member of the ‘lower class’ in the Kinyarwanda language. Hence, this ethnic label became the unifying identifier of a conglomerate of Bantu tribes who banded together to resist the economic class oppression they lived under.

against the Ndebele Kingdom over this time (except for a few exceptions of Shona chiefs refusing to pay taxes to Lobengula), provides the necessary fuel for the prevailing narrative that under the reigns of Mzilikazi and Lobengula there was a highly united kingdom with a sustained peaceful diplomacy and an encompassing benevolence toward the cultural and religious practices of the assimilated foreigners in their midst.

To better comprehend the textual make-up of this triumphal Ndebele script, it is critical to interrogate the centrality of the narrative theme of Ndebele *raiding* in Shona territories that was supposedly sustained throughout the rule of Mzilikazi and Lobengula. The rhetoric surrounding this ‘raiding’ script follows a predictable pattern without much variation: *Ndebele warriors regularly penetrated into Shona locations stealing cattle, abducting women as wives and kidnapping young men to be conscripted as soldiers*. The discursive repetition of this ‘raiding’ narrative throughout the research interview samples was striking, but even more intriguing was the relative dearth of printed research or historical-political evidence providing a descriptive account of the actual nature and form of these ‘raids’ which feature so prominently in both Ndebele and Shona ethnic narratives. Most available characterisations of these ‘raiding’ expeditions are often veiled, draped in the tactical language of strategic military and diplomatic exercises:

“Using his two-pronged method of nation-building, voluntary assimilation and forcible incorporation, which he had perfected in Transvaal, Mzilikazi built a formidable nation out of the residents of his newly found haven in Zimbabwe, and created a new state...”³⁰⁹

“Mzilikazi employed such strategies as raiding, conquest, assimilation and the incorporation of individuals, groups and communities. It included inculcating Ndebele values and language over people of different ethnic groups.”³¹⁰

“I think what happens is, if you go back into history as well, if you go back into the 1800s, you discover that when the Ndebeles first crossed the Limpopo and entered present-day Zimbabwe, what happened is – you see they are coming from a military background in Zululand where...I mean, they were warriors on the move, and what these guys did is they were like following the Zulu notion of how the Zulu kingdom was built. Because from a small clique they conquered and integrated, conquered and integrated, so you find that today, they are all Zulu, they speak one language but they come from different areas. So what happened is when Mzilikazi won present-day Zimbabwe, he was following that plan of

³⁰⁹ Sibanda, E. 2004: 16.

³¹⁰ Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S. 2008: 38.

conquering and integration. So what he did is when he settled there, the people who were there were integrated, and they easily integrated because they had no where to run to. And then as the empire started growing, that's when the raids started, you know, going elsewhere. They went and took cattle, and whatever, the women and the young men, some were integrated into it.”³¹¹

When dissecting these narratives, the first observation is that the descriptive wording employed is exceptionally generalist in nature, thus providing little detail of the undertakings of these ‘raids’. The second observation is that the reader is immediately drawn into a performance of linguistic sanitization of war. Barring the vocabulary of ‘conquering’ and ‘forcible incorporation’ the reader is almost lulled into believing that the cultural traditions and values of the Ndebele nation appeared so attractive and stabilizing for the ‘outsiders’ that they willingly flocked to join the movement.

There are pieces of evidence³¹² that would indicate that Mzilikazi did experience a measure of voluntary assimilation by Sotho and Tswana peoples during his encampment in the Transvaal of South Africa between the years of 1826 to 1838, described as such: “...a period of ambiguous peace rather than devastation. The Ndebele managed to push out the Griqua, Kora and other brigands that subsisted on raiding the Sotho and the Tswana. This atmosphere attracted some of these communities to join the Ndebele on their own volition.”³¹³ It may be reasonable to believe that certain groups (like the Sotho and Tswana) who were experiencing a high level of threat (physical and material insecurity) may have willingly been incorporated into the Ndebele nation for purposes of protection. However, beyond these pragmatic motivations it seems highly unlikely that any distinct ethnic people group would voluntarily submit itself to another out of simple goodwill.

What is often missing is the uncensored script of the brutal reality of war, conquest and the ‘necessary’ repression that must be enforced by any advancing nation if they are to expand at such a gallant pace. Glass captures a glimpse of this raw text of war crusades in the following description of the raids in the latter years of the Ndebele rule:

³¹¹ Interview: DL1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 11/08/06 – (Ndebele Journalist employed as a business editor for a prominent newspaper).

³¹² Kinsmen, M. 1995. *Hungry Wolves: The Impact of Violence on Rolong Life, 1823-1836*, in Hamilton, C. (ed.) *The Mfecane Aftermath: Reconstructive Debates in Southern Africa*, Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press.

³¹³ Ndlovu-Gatsheni. 2008: 38.

“In order to maintain his state, Lobengula has to continue raiding, the raids soon became mere expeditions of robbers seizing cattle, tribute and youths, fighting being limited to the slaughter of women and old men. When the pioneers arrived they looked upon the gloomy Mashona faces on which the stamp of bondage clearly showed.”³¹⁴

Therefore, a more apt and realistic description of the Ndebele policy of incorporation (also called integration or assimilation)³¹⁵ is captured well in the words of the third transcript paragraph above: “...and they easily integrated because they had no where to run to.”³¹⁶

To better understand the significance of the narratives enveloping this ‘raiding’ history, it is critical to explore the psycho-social implications of these scripts and the evolution of counter discourses that have been manufactured in order to provide a ‘corrective’ view of the past. This first set of interview excerpts lends credence to the processes of collective internalization and inter-generational transmission of emotive trauma and revenge that these historical ‘raiding’ narratives evoke:

“The history is because of Mzilikazi, he ran away from Shaka. Then he went to Zimbabwe, he killed the Shonas and took their cattle, and their wives maybe. And that ‘grudge’ is still there, yes. That grudge between Shonas and Ndebeles is because of Mzilikazi.”³¹⁷

“You see because Ndebeles were warriors, they used to raid the Shona people. Now, tribalism in Zimbabwe centres around that - that the Ndebeles came to raid the Shona people. So there’s always been a yearning in the heart of the Shonas to revenge for that.”³¹⁸

“...when the combatants were travelling around during the war, if Shona ones came around the talked about Ndebele people having taken cattle from their grandparents and so on, their great grandparents. And they were saying ‘you are now paying for it. You were not there, you don’t know anything about it but it still stands. And you have to pay for that. So when we come around, you feed us –

³¹⁴ Glass, S. 1968: 6.

³¹⁵ The use of the word ‘incorporation’ is intentional as it denotes a more militaristic or forceful process, whereas the words ‘integration’ and ‘assimilation’ tend to connote a degree of free-will choice and volunteerism.

³¹⁶ Interview: DL1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 11/08/06 – (Ndebele Journalist employed as a business editor for a prominent newspaper).

³¹⁷ Interview: JD1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 15/09/06 – (Female Ndebele NGO activist advocating for women and refugee rights).

³¹⁸ Interview: FN1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 26/10/07 – (Ndebele Finance Manager and former employee of the ZANU-PF Ministry of Finance and the National Oil Company of Zimbabwe in the early 1980s).

you butcher cattle because we cannot carry them to Mashonaland. But you people, your grandparents, took many cattle from this end and so you've got to pay for that.”³¹⁹

In the minds, and daresay for some even in the hearts of these respondents the blight of those ‘raiding’ events from antiquity (the 1800s) still hold sway as plausible explanations for the current generational grievances and grudges (perceived or actual) being clung to by Shona people today.

The second set of interview extractions question the assumptions that underpin the historical and psycho-social grip that these ‘raiding’ narratives can (or should) have on the psyche of a people:

“But it was like a history and a nice story to hear – not like inciting you to avenge or...it was nice during school time to hear that Ndebeles were powerful, used spears, pushed...took away wives of Shonas, what-what. But that I don't think created more hatred than the Liberation Struggle coming to atrocities.”³²⁰

“But, of course if any person is going to be perpetrating that kind of history or teaching, it is a misguided teaching and it is meant to achieve a particular agenda – and that agenda is to seek to divide the people of Zimbabwe to say they are not the same, there's a historical grudge which dates back to that period of time, and they were sworn enemies, and they used to raid and subjugate the Shona people and that kind of thing. I think, to some extent, if someone really wants to exploit that kind of line and perpetuate it – it does in a way also perpetuate that kind of culture or form the general understanding and shape that relations between people if it is perpetrated in a particular manner to drive a particular agenda.”³²¹

“What I believe is the ethnic dimension to the problem helped to sooth the conscience – people could do it...people they know they are doing wrong things – but they need something that soothes their conscience. And to say ‘these people are Ndebele’ and then you can say historically ‘they used to kill our forefathers’ or ‘they are going for our ladies, they kept our children and cattle’ – that sort of becomes a good excuse for something that you know is wrong.”³²²

This cluster of respondents explain the ‘raiding’ discourse as a form of seemingly harmless children's stories (although this explanation could be highly suspect depending

³¹⁹ Interview: NM1, Mtshabezi, Zimbabwe – 28/06/06 – (Female Ndebele Peace Activist working with rural Matabeleland women).

³²⁰ Interview: RM1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 14/09/06 – (Ndebele former security officer for opposition party and survivor of severe torture as a political prisoner under the ZANU-PF government).

³²¹ Interview: SD1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 18/08/06 – (Shona Human Rights Lawyer).

³²² Interview: PN1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 30/03/07 – (Ndebele historian, author, researcher and archivist).

on which side of the conflict one finds themselves), as a manipulative, subjective re-writing of history, and/or as an ancient political alibi used by present day political leaders to mask their agency and probable implication in acts of severe violence.

This final set of interview respondents question whether the ‘raiding’ discourse as it is publicly articulated and currently presented actually occurred and some venture to offer alternative narrative explanations to the ‘raiding’ story:

“No, no – that’s a distorted history sometimes. We learnt in different schools, but I myself, I always disagree with people...So when Mzilikazi came here, these Shonas they were there also, they said, ‘no they’re going to fight’...The only thing is ‘let’s make an army’. They went there to collect the boys from that side; that’s the pure history. They came to this side and trained them. After training them they said, ‘no – you, you come from a certain ethnic group, us we come from a certain ethnic group, but we can’t marry each other – go and marry’. They went back those boys, to get their wives. They haven’t come back. So, the people say they took their wives. That is the purest this one, the pure history.”³²³

“A divergent view that I heard was that, you know, in the process of these raids...Lobengula, Mzilikazi would capture young Shona men whom he would bring over and integrate them into his army. After the training they would have to go back to their homes and, you know, raid women for them...to fetch wives for themselves, as it were. So that’s the version I’ve heard.”³²⁴

“If it’s the issue of cattle being stolen, we know that the Shonas also stole cattle from the Ndebele people. If it’s the issue of women, we need them to come among us and tell us ‘this is the woman that never voluntarily got married to Ndebele’ and because traditionally, among the Ndebele people, people were restricted on who to marry. And that restriction is still strong, even today. It is really very difficult now to imagine that we can [be] accused of having taken other people’s wives when in actual fact we have that rule and restriction among our people, as far as marriage is concerned. It is remotely possible even now to get an Ndebele to marry a Shona because of that cultural background, that cultural difference.”³²⁵

These interviewees present an Ndebele counter narrative to the aggressive ‘raiding’ script proffered by many Shona nationalists. Inferring that possibly this ‘raiding’ discourse provides a convenient disguise for the violent revenge of a vanquished people (as played out in the Matabeleland massacres of the 1980s). From a linguistics point of view, it is

³²³ Interview: AN2, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 12/09/07 – (Ndebele Ex-ZIPRA Soldier).

³²⁴ Interview: DN3, Johannesburg, South Africa – 30/10/07 – (Ndebele NGO Peace worker facilitating trauma healing and reconciliation among rural Matabeleland communities and survivors of Gukurahundi violence).

³²⁵ Interview: PK1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 30/03/07 – (A prominent member of Ndebele Royal Family).

striking to hear the first speakers use of polarising language; such as ‘these Shonas’, ‘that / this side’, ‘you / we come from a certain ethnic group’ and ‘those boys’. This literary bifurcation represents the ‘us/them’ thinking that plagues conflicting parties caught in a cycles of enemy-formation and internalisation.

These alternative stories also suggest that the so-called ‘raids’ may have been more benign than portrayed; possibly even being implemented by the same Shona young men who had earlier been captured and forcibly conscripted by the Ndebele military structures. The reasoning follows that these young Shona men were in pursuit of women to marry as they had been culturally forbidden to wed Ndebele women, so they returned to their communities and took wives for themselves.

A variation of this narrative is that the Ndebele warriors went on their own to abduct Shona women, not for themselves but on behalf of the young Shona men whom they had captured and forced to become soldiers in their army. This narrative assumes that the Ndebele had plenty of women from their own nation and therefore were not in need of Shona women except for purposes of supplying women for the newly incorporated Shona soldiers. Either way, this discourse is a rigorous effort to rationalize away the devastation of the Ndebele raiding that was conducted; giving an excuse that it served a higher purpose, that of ethnic purity in that the Ndebele and the Shona were not allowed to inter-marry due to cultural stipulations. Whether inter-marriage was forbidden in the past or not is debatable, however in the present circumstances it certainly appears to be negotiable:

“But now I have a Shona, I stay with her...we are together here [South Africa]. But these dynamics, I have battled with it and tried to show my parents that no, Shona people they are people...The sins of those people cannot be brought into a whole grouping. Our sins we have to carry them individually, they are not communal. And I’ve reasoned with my parents and they have come to understand it that; there are also good Shona people...But, to be honest, when we sometimes, you know, have our own conflict, she sometimes makes those statements that ‘aha, my parents told me that Ndebeles are like this and this and this’, you know. Then I would be like ‘no I’m not like that.’”³²⁶

However, at least two other questions remain unanswered: First, if the Mthwakazi nation was so capable of assimilating external ethnic groups their strategy must have

³²⁶ Interview: SM1, Durban, South Africa – 07/03/07 – (Ndebele teacher, researcher and university lecture).

included inter-marriage, so why would this policy not apply to these young Shona soldiers? A possible explanation for this restriction could be that the Shona were considered to be part of the lowest class in the Ndebele nation: “A more popular term for these tribes was ama-Hole (Maholi or Mahole) which Lobengula generally used to imply his ‘slave-people’. The Holi formed a servile caste that was denied full membership (including inter-marriage) of the tribe.”³²⁷ Second, if it was indeed young *Shona* men who were the ‘agent provocateurs’ in these raiding events why would they need to kidnap their *own* Shona women by force? Surely, their communities would have been pleased to welcome home their ‘lost’ sons and would have readily assisted in arranging brides for them.

Various other cultural extrapolations are utilized to explain the cattle wrestling and ‘abducting’ of children/youth practiced by Mzilikazi and Lobengula. As far as stock-theft is concerned, once the Ndebele king had subdued the surrounding people (whether by physical occupation or taxation by extension) it was culturally accepted that he was the sole owner of the kingdom under his jurisdiction.

“The entire area [Mashonaland], as we have seen, was claimed by the Matabele, although it was not actually occupied by them. Umziligazi had started the practice of raiding the Mashona tribes. His economic power had largely depended on his controlling the available resources of the country. According to custom the herds of cattle belonged to the nation – that is, the Matabele nation – and in his hands, as king, their possession was vested.”³²⁸

Thus, under traditional law and practice the king was entitled to any of the livestock (and other natural resources) in the kingdom as this was his source of wealth and inheritance. *Hence, some have attempted to explain the cattle theft performed by Ndebele warriors as a cultural clash of Ndebele and Shona perceptions of traditional kingship, authority and ownership.*

There is yet another parallel text that incorporates an explanation for both the cattle and the youth/children. This script avoids the usage of any phraseology that would suggest force or violence. Instead, it employs the language of ‘bartering’ claiming that cattle (something the Ndebele had plenty of and the Shona needed) were exchanged for Shona children/youth (supposedly a clever way to fashion faithful subjects for the future

³²⁷ Glass, S. 1968: 5 (see footnote No. 12).

³²⁸ Ibid.

of the Ndebele Kingdom).³²⁹ The ethnic and cultural-language identification with the Ndebele only came later once the Shona has been assimilated into the Ndebele Kingdom for a considerable amount time.

With the categories of the Shona as the '*vanquished*' and the Ndebele as the legitimated '*victors*' packaged in these textual, binary forms of pre-colonial historical recount, the plot was established for the next generation to internalize and take 'ownership' of these designated identities for themselves. After appropriating these roles through the oral and written production of patriotic history the future generations were poised to begin to live by them (consciously or sub-consciously) with the commensurate level of emotional intensity as their parents or grandparents had before them.³³⁰

4.3. Ethnicity: Colonial Period - Narratives of Splintering and Subjugation

During the colonial era, the British 'masters' (a rogue band of explorers, gold hunters, entrepreneurs, and missionaries) exerted large amounts of energy around manipulating the Ndebele and Shona ethnic identities through prejudiced perceptions and the common instrument of 'divide and conquer' pitting one ethnic group against another in an effort to justify the white man's rule over the 'ungovernable black man.' Upon contact with the Ndebele peoples, the white settlers almost immediately observed and wrote about what appeared to be a unified social order, advanced military structure and a powerful leadership polity in contrast to the Shona peoples who were characterized as the opposite. These stereo-typed notions only served to substantiate the already dominant narrative of victor and vanquished as discussed in the above section. Of interest is to note that the residue of this prejudicial contrast between the fierce Ndebele and the meek Shona remains even up to the present-day.

"I don't know whether it was from ZANU-PF people or not but you always had the notion that Ndebele people were higher...because after all they were the descendents of Zulus...that might have been a little boy's world of talking but that certainly was the sense that 'Ndebele people, you don't mess around with them, they'll knife you or whatever', and Shona people always seem peace-loving."³³¹

³²⁹ Yap, K. 2001: 25.

³³⁰ For a parallel explanation of inter-generational transmission of victim pain transformed into killer 'genocidal' rage, see Lemarchand, R. 1994. *Burundi – Ethnic Conflict and Genocide*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

³³¹ Interview: TM1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 01/11/07 – (Shona Businessman whose relative was a prominent leader in the ZANU-PF government).

4.3.1. The Matabele War of 1893

In his historical research on the Matabele War of 1893, Stafford Glass documents the military organisation and prowess of the Matabele people and how the colonial powers not only feared and respected them for this power; they subsequently behaved opportunistically toward them.³³² Upon realizing that they could not subdue the Ndebele through treachery, they proceeded to pit the Ndebele in opposition to the Shona in hopes to convince the Shona to side with them against the Matabele kingdom. The British, who initiated the Matabele War under the administrative leadership of one Dr. Leander Jameson, considered Lobengula as a hindrance to their access to the land and mineral wealth; particularly that of the Shona territories: “[The British]...finally made it clear to the Matabele King and his people that Mashonaland was being lost to them without an assegai being raised.”³³³

In a bid to appear civil and diplomatic in posture, the British, represented by Cecil Rhodes and the notorious British South Africa Company, as well as a number of Boer frontier groups purportedly signed a series of land and mineral extraction and ownership treaties with Mzilikazi and Lobengula between 1836 and 1888. However, aside from the obvious linguistic-cultural barriers between the Ndebele royalty and the British settlers, the legitimacy of these agreements is highly suspect. Many of these treaties have been carefully researched and interrogated and there lingers a great deal of scepticism surrounding the signing and implementation of these agreements. Even today, they remain shrouded in doubt, deception, and multiple instances of cunning manipulation by the British and Boer colonial representatives as well as the clergy who assisted them in this intrigue.³³⁴

After signing the Rudd Concession under great pressure and duress in 1888, King Lobengula later realized he had been deceived and backed out of the agreement:

“Lobengula renounced the Rudd Concession early in 1889. In a letter to Queen Victoria, Lobengula said that what he now learned was contained in the Concession were not his words and that he had been tricked into believing that they were.”³³⁵

³³² Glass, S. 1968: 48-59.

³³³ Ibid: 59.

³³⁴ Martin, D & Johnson, P. 1981:37-44.

³³⁵ Ibid: 339 (see endnote No. 21).

These Matebele treaties with the ‘white man’ have provided the incubating source of a number of well-nursed Shona narrative grievances that accuse the Ndebele of selling Zimbabwe into the hands of the colonizers:

“Because if you remember Zimbabwe’s history there was talk of how Lobengula was the King of Matabeleland after 1863 it was after Lobengula died, so people were saying ‘he sold the country’ ...that the country was sold by Ndebeles.”³³⁶

The Matabele War commenced on the 5th of October, 1893 and ended a month later on the 4th of November when Lobengula fled and the British marched into Bulawayo. Official British historical records blamed the war on Ndebele insurrection, increased Matabele violence (Ndebele raids on white settlers) and sabotage (the cutting of the telegraph wires and settler infra-structural destruction)³³⁷ and the supposed need to protect the Shona from the oppressive rule of the Ndebele. This notion of ‘Shona protection’ was seized upon in 1891 when a particular Shona chief named Lomagundi was summarily killed by Lobengula’s warriors for refusing to pay the tax levies the King demanded.³³⁸ When questioned by the British on this assassination, Lobengula’s reported response was curt and seemingly harsh (as paraphrased in a letter written by a colonial representative named Colenbrander in 1892):

“I sent a lot of my men to go and tell Lomagunda [Colenbrander’s spelling] to ask you and the white people why you were there and what you were doing. He sent word back to me that he refused to deliver my message and that he was not my slave – this is why I sent some of my men to go and kill him. Lomagunda belongs to me. Does the country belong to Lomagunda?”³³⁹

At the same time as the colonial leadership mischievously ‘demonised’ the Matabele (whom they had initially praised) they increased their furore over the severe plight of the Shona who they painted as being viciously oppressed by the Ndebele and in desperate need of rescue. After a raid by Ndebele warriors who had passed through a camp of the Mashonaland Agency where approximately 150 Shona workers were

³³⁶ Interview: GS1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 17/08/06 – (Shona Human Rights Lawyer and survivor of severe torture as a political prisoner under the ZANU-PF government).

³³⁷ Glass, S. 1968: 60-66.

³³⁸ Ibid: 48-51.

³³⁹ Ibid: 50.

employed, the colonial representative (a Mr. Wrey) described the Shona workers reaction as follows:

“...these were absolutely paralysed with fear and announced their intention of leaving directly. It was only with great trouble and persuasion that they were induced to remain, and our position was a most false one; for as the natives very plainly said: ‘When you white man came into Mashonaland, you promised that if we worked for you, you would prevent the Matabele from raiding us. Here we are working for you and here are the Matabele killing our wives and children and raiding our homes.’”³⁴⁰

In response to the above accusation (that the Matabele were brutal oppressors over the Shona) the Ndebele have nurtured a counter-narrative that draws attention to how quickly Mashonaland ‘fell’ to the white settler rule (implying that Shona are traitors) as opposed to the Ndebele kingdom that resisted white colonial rule up until its bitter military defeat in 1893:

“But there’s always been this discussion that Shonas have brought all the disaster to this country. After 1819, 10 September 1819, Salisbury, the Union flag was raised in Fort Salisbury. But down this side it was still Ndebele-led kingdom until 1893 when Lobengula disappeared somewhere in the Shangani and not to be seen again. So, Ndebele’s are saying ‘just hold it; we were not part of this bigger picture called Rhodesia – we are actually an independent state. We are short of being called a Protectorate.’”³⁴¹

This narrative not only reinforces the script of the Shona being weak and easily susceptible to being defeated or engaging in treacherous behaviours, but it reinforces the proud, independent strength and the military stature of the Ndebele nation. Additionally, the interviewee speaks in ethereal, almost sacred language about the disappearance of Lobengula into the Shangani Forests, a geographical location that holds a rich and powerful space in Matabele mythology as a magical place of retreat, protection and renewal for the Ndebele fugitive when under threat.³⁴² In all this there lies a mysterious insinuation that maybe Lobengula is in someway immortal; a man who cheated death and is to be revered as part of the ‘glorification’ of Ndebele history and nationhood.

³⁴⁰ Ibid: 52.

³⁴¹ Interview: JN1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 29/03/07 – (Ndebele teacher and activist working for the Catholic Commission on Peace and Justice CCJP in the 1980s).

³⁴² Alexander, J, McGregor, J, & Ranger, T. 2000. *Violence and Memory – One Hundred Years in the Dark Forests of Matabeleland*. Oxford: James Currey.

4.3.2. The Matabele and Mashona Uprisings – 1895-1897

Not long after the Matabele War of 1893, the Ndebele followed by the Shona led a series of uprisings against the British colonial rule between the years of 1895-97. In December of 1895, the British-Rhodesian administrator Dr. Leander Jameson led a failed military raid into Transvaal, South Africa leaving the Rhodesian settler communities exposed. With only forty-eight European mounted police to protect the Rhodesian territories, the Matabele under the inspiration and leadership of their high priest Umlugulu and an induna named Mpotshwana, decided to seize the opportunity and attack.³⁴³ In describing the causes of this Matabele uprising colonial writers extended their inevitable narratives of prejudice:

“It was not natural for a nation of savages who had taken so much pride in their former strength and tribal greatness to discard the cloak of racial independence for the sackcloth of servitude without a struggle.”³⁴⁴

As opposed to the naïve colonial notion that the Ndebele uprising was a result of Ndebele being sore losers from the War of 1893, more recent scholarship has identified the Ndebele grievances as many-fold. Firstly, the large number of cattle confiscated by the colonial authorities was unacceptable. Secondly, the forced labour and horrific working conditions placed on the Ndebele by the British South African Company became unbearable. Thirdly, an outbreak of drought, famine and pestilence was causing great hardships on the Ndebele who believed that these natural disasters were curses from the white rule. All of these factors in combination fomented the Ndebele revolt.³⁴⁵

The Matabele uprisings ended in a stand-off with the British who finally opted for a diplomatic settlement, much to the chagrin of a number of settler soldiers who were hankering for a military victory.³⁴⁶ The facilitated compromise contained a British offer to reverse some of their repressive policies toward the African populations and peace was negotiated after holding four *indabas* (isiZulu for Councils of Elders) held at Matapos Hills and attended by both British representatives (including Cecil John Rhodes) and Matabele *indunas* (isiZulu referring to traditional leaders). Part of the facilitated

³⁴³ Martin, D. & Johnson, P. 1981: 48.

³⁴⁴ Ibid: 47.

³⁴⁵ Sibanda, E. 2004: 23-24.

³⁴⁶ Ibid: 23.

agreement entailed the British providing seeds for farming and the restoration of some of the cattle that they had previously taken from the Ndebele.³⁴⁷

The Mashona uprisings followed on the heels of the Matabele initiative in June of 1896. The impetus for the Mashonaland attacks was partly due to the opportunity created by the Matabeleland insurgency and partly due to circumstances characterizing the authoritarian colonial rule, such as an imposed British 'justice' system, forced labour, increased control of all economic trading and livelihoods, land seizure and the unjust institution of an annual hut tax. This Shona insurrection lasted for over a year (according to the British it was concluded in October 1897) and was partially instigated by two Shona spirit mediums: Gomporeshumba, who was purported to be possessed by the Shona spirit Kagubi, and an elderly woman who was possessed by the Shona spirit Nehanda. This Shona uprising was clearly a surprise and as such, raised the ire of great indignation on the part of the colonial rulers as to the 'utter and dastardly insolence' of the whole occurrence. Yet again, the colonial rhetoric surrounding this Shona uprising was barbed with denigrating ethnic slurs meant to undercut the human dignity and disposition of the Shona:

“Cowardice was their besetting sin. A *sjambok* [a whip made from flexible tree branch] in the hand of a determined man was sufficient to send them scurrying in all directions. As a race they lacked courage and spirit, and from the White man's point of view, possessed few redeeming qualities. Any suggestion that so spineless a people could have perpetrated the outrages they committed during the rebellion would have been laughed to scorn.”³⁴⁸

Unlike the negotiated settlement offered to the Matabele, the Shona uprising was not afforded the same level of respect from the colonial authorities. Instead, through a series of captures and public executions of key Shona leaders (including the two spirit mediums) the insurgency was stamped out. These uprisings called 'Impi YoMvukela' (in Ndebele) and the first 'Chimerenga' (in Shona) both roughly translated to mean uprising, revolt, war, riot or revolution³⁴⁹ became notorious in the patriotic history of both the

³⁴⁷ Ranger, T. 1999. *Voices from the Rocks: Nature, Culture and History in the Matapos Hills of Zimbabwe*. Harare: Baobab Press.

³⁴⁸ Martin, D & Johnson, P. 1981: 48-49

³⁴⁹ Lyons, T. 2004. *Guns and Guerrilla Girls – Women in the Zimbabwean National Liberation Struggle*. Africa World Press, 98 (see endnote no. 3). 'Chimerenga' has also been translated to mean liberation in Hodari, A. J. 2009. *The African Book of Names: 4000+ Common and Uncommon Names from the African Continent*. Health Communications, Inc., 335 (see endnote no. 2), and also struggle in *Goliath Business*

ZAPU and the ZANU revolutionary movements as they marked a starting point of African nationalism and the liberation struggle for Zimbabwe's independence.³⁵⁰

Throughout this period of Matabele and Mashona uprisings, the colonial settlers maintained an on-going strategy of attempting to *splinter and subdue* both the Ndebeles and Shonas. Numerous Ndebele and Shona voices have countered these contentious narratives with dignity and pride, pointing to these joint uprisings and the collaborative resistance against the British in the late 1890s as evidence of the tangible unity that does exist between Ndebele and Shona. Hence, an alternative narrative to the opaque racially divisive rhetoric of the colonial dispensation arose. An empowering, cooperative narrative of idyllic unification and purpose between the Ndebele and Shona against a common enemy was developed:

“In time, the whole of Zimbabwe was under a general African uprising in both Matabeleland and Mashonaland. The uprising of AmaShona shattered the stereotype by the white settlers that the AmaShona were a cowardly people, and also that they viewed whites as their benefactors.”³⁵¹

In his influential 1967 study on the Matabele and Mashona uprisings, Terrence Ranger argues that the revolts were instigated and motivated by a historic partnership of solidarity between Ndebele traditional leaders (indunas) and Shona religious leaders (priests) representing the Mwari cult: “The [Ndebele] alliance against the whites was cemented by the Mwari or Mlimo cult, part of the ancient Shona religious system.”³⁵² For Ranger, this was a pivotal point in the ascendance of African liberation and the awakening of Zimbabwean nationalism.³⁵³

However, traces of the *splintering narratives* of the colonial era have also left a negative imprint on Ndebele and Shona relations with threads of contrary narratives emerging that re-think the perceived unity and coordination (between Ndebele and Shona) against the colonial oppressors. These alternate narratives imply that the Ndebele

News. Retrieved from the web 16/03/09. goliath.ecnext.com/coms2/gi_0199-8652905/Boys-with-the-jit-bug.htm

³⁵⁰ According to the ZANU-PF, the ‘second Chimereenga’ refers to the armed struggle from 1965-1980 and the ‘third Chimereenga’ refers to the fast-track land occupancy / redistribution programme instituted in the year 2000.

³⁵¹ Sibanda, E. 2004: 23

³⁵² Martin, D. & Johnson, P. 1981: 48.

³⁵³ Ranger, T. 1967. *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia, 1896-1897: A Study in African Resistance*. London: Heinemann Press.

exercised the leadership in the resistance and the Shona only followed later, and that in some cases the Shona remained committed to the colonial leaders and functioned as traitors amidst the resistance movement. The critical interrogations seem to intersect with two major questions swirling around *initiation* (who instigated and gave direction to the uprisings, the Ndebele or the Shona?) and *coordination* (how closely in tandem did the Ndebele and Shona actually work?). E. Sibanda highlights these contested issues: “Modern history scholars, however, are becoming increasingly sceptical of this thesis of [unified resistance] and its attendant position that the rebellion was a well-coordinated national effort by Africans.”³⁵⁴ Sibanda continues by citing research by Julian Cobbing³⁵⁵ that indicates that the Matabele uprising was both planned and executed independently of the Shona and research by Shona specialist, David Beach³⁵⁶ suggests that although the Shona uprising was considerably wide-spread, it was not highly strategic or well-coordinated.

While the historical details of these uprisings remain contested, the crucial question for the study of narrative is: What is the significance of the discourse that emphasizes the points of *initiation* and *coordination* in the scramble for political power? For the triumphal nationalist these competitive positions of leadership (initiation and coordination) insinuate superiority in collective intellect and developmental organization of a nation, both of which have been laid claim to by the Ndebele and the Shona at different points in history, and both of which occupy centre stage in the political theatre of Zimbabwe today.

4.3.3. Urban Violent Clashes of 1929 and 1960

Hints of ethnic hostilities spilled over in two different events in more recent colonial history. The first incidence was the faction fighting that broke out in Bulawayo City in 1929 between what appeared to be Ndebele residents and the new influx of Shona migrant workers. The second occasion surfaced in the urban gang violence that subsumed the city of Bulawayo and its surrounds in 1960. In an attempt to deflect the classic ethnic divide theories (usually subscribed to by the colonial regimes), both of these incidences

³⁵⁴ Sibanda, E. 2004: 25.

³⁵⁵ Cobbing, J. 1977. “The Absent Priesthood: Another look at the Rhodesian Risings of 1896-7”. *Journal of African History*, 18 (1).

³⁵⁶ Beach, D.N. 1986. *War and Politics in Zimbabwe, 1840-1900*. Gweru: Mambo Press.

were initially cast in terms of economic injustices exploding into violent ‘class struggles’.³⁵⁷ However, more recently there has been renewed credence given to the xenophobic ingredient of this urban violence³⁵⁸ coupled with a deviation in the direction of explaining this violence as the collision of ethnic antagonisms *and* the contestation over control of social capital. In this case, ‘control of social capital’ means the power to influence social infra-structure, relational networks, trends that mobilize the people and public recognition or status definition in society at large.³⁵⁹

In summary, colonial narratives were continually being constructed and deconstructed; evolving around *shifting alliances* and *imagined betrayals* between the whites and Africans and between the Africans themselves; Ndebele and Shona. The result was a constant flow of intrigue concerning who was *loyal* to whom, and who was not. The Colonisers became masters at breeding suspicions and subsequent accusations of traitors and informants, of rebels and rabble-rousers. This primordial tactic of ‘divide and rule’ returned with a vengeance in the form of labelling ‘dissidents’ and ‘heroes’ during the Gukurahundi violence in the 1980s. Hence, this research asserts that the colonial narratives of ‘splintering and subjugation’ (which were nested in the pre-colonial meta-narratives of Ndebele as ‘victor’ and Shona as ‘vanquished’) were partially successful as they effectively heightened the ethnic competitiveness that set the stage for actual inter-ethnic violence to be perpetrated. The ‘stage’ of ethnic superiority complex was not only set, the ‘actors’ were now armed with the necessary ‘scripts’ and ‘props’ to act out their convictions and grievances. It was this posture of ethnic polarization or ‘combat readiness’ that catapulted the violent clashes that transpired internally between ZAPU/ZIPRA and ZANU/ZANLA during the time of the Liberation Struggle.

4.4. Ethnicity: Liberation Struggle Years - ‘Sons of the Soil’ - ‘Sons of Segregation’

At the inception of the modern-day liberation movement, there was a unified story verbalised in the hearts and minds of both the Ndebele and the Shona vocalising a dream,

³⁵⁷ Phimister, I. and van Onselen, C. 1979. “The Political Economy of Tribal Animosity: A Case Study of the 1929 Bulawayo Location ‘Faction Fight’”. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 6 (1): 1-43.

³⁵⁸ Msindo, E. 2006. “Ethnicity, not Class? The 1929 Bulawayo Faction Fights Reconsidered”. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 32 (3): 429-447.

³⁵⁹ Ranger, T. 2006. “The Meaning of Urban Violence in Africa: Bulawayo, Southern Rhodesia, 1890-1960”. *The Journal of Cultural and Social History Society* 3 (2): 218.

a future view of freedom from white oppression for the African peoples living in Southern Rhodesia. As the African nationalist movement took root and formalized its organizational structure under the initial banner of the African National Congress (ANC) in 1957³⁶⁰, they referred to themselves as the '*Sons of the Soil*'.

“...[in] an article which was written by or they interviewed James Chikerema, who was ZAPU vice president, and I agree with what he says – ZAPU has become very powerful as a Nationalist movement by 1962, it was formed in December 1961. By 1962 it was very powerful and there was unity, you know, ‘the son of the soil’ was the slogan.”³⁶¹

This patriotic, revolutionary slogan invoked a visceral sense of African nationalism at two levels. At one level it spoke of a deep sense of '*belonging*', of a people formed out of the dust of the earth with an intimate connection to the soil of Africa. This spoke volumes to a people who felt dislocated, displaced in their own country of origin. At another level, it was a nuanced referral to the African's rightful claim to the *land*, which had been stolen from them by the coming of the white man, resulting in the issue of land redistribution becoming a central pillar to the pan-African politico-economic platform. This was an alluring vision, a mobilising call to action that drew both Ndebele and Shona to join forces in the Liberation struggle.

“Yes, true. They would fight in union and they were doing that in union, until something happened somewhere. Because...each group that came, it didn't matter, Shona or Ndebele, I mean each group of fighters – they wanted to eliminate the enemy who was the white man...the Smith regime. Until in the end when we had our independence, then then they talked about eliminating Nkomo. But before that, they were in a united front against the White man – that's what we experienced in the war.”³⁶²

However, this rallying battle cry of unity, the '*Sons of the Soil*' soon became a lament of the '*Sons of Segregation*' as the struggle movement split apart (between ZAPU and ZANU) in 1963.

³⁶⁰ Martin, M. 1979. *The Past is Another Country – Rhodesia 1890-1979*. Glasgow, UK: Andre Deutsch Publishers, 11. The ANC, which was banned in 1959, morphed into the National Democratic Party (NDP) in 1960. After the banning of the NDP, the Zimbabwe African Peoples Union (ZAPU) was birthed in 1961 only to be banned in 1962.

³⁶¹ Interview: PN1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe - 30/03/07 – (Ndebele historian, author and archivist).

³⁶² Interview: NM1, Mtshabezi, Zimbabwe – 28/06/06 – (Female Ndebele Peace Activist working with rural Matabeleland women).

“ZAPU was for everybody. We had Chinamano...we buried Zimbabwe-Rhodesia with Chinamano, a Shona, ZAPU was not like that. ZAPU has Shonas, Ndebeles, Karangas, all the types in Zimbabwe. Only ZANU was for Shona.”³⁶³

This separation would remain a ‘thorn in the flesh’ of the nationalist movement for decades to come. The reasons for this political divorce range from conflicting leadership styles, divergent political strategies to personality jealousies and vendettas:

“Dissatisfaction with Nkomo was rife. His opposition urged a more confrontationist approach to the Rhodesian government and wanted a new political party; they were tired, too, of what they regarded as Nkomo’s vacillation over the years.”³⁶⁴

“Obviously they [Rhodesian government] know Nkomo has no foresight, no plans, and so they will prefer to deal with a muddle-headed opponent. It is much easier...Nkomo sat around and waited for some sort of outside help. We want to teach our people to be dependent on themselves...Nkomo is weak, cowardly, evasive, corrupt...”³⁶⁵

“ His [Nkomo’s] ideas came under heavy criticism from Robert Mugabe his Secretary General, Julius Nyerere, then president of Tanzania, and his once trusted friend, Ndabaningi Sithole, who it seems were now becoming alarmed by Nkomo’s popularity at home and abroad. ZAPU split along ethnic grounds a year after its formation...”³⁶⁶

This prevailing antagonism between ZAPU and ZANU was not only contained in the upper echelons of political leadership, it overflowed into the rank and file members of both political camps. In October of 1963, it was reported that “there have been vicious threats and some fighting between ZANU and PCC [the organization that formed after the banning of ZAPU]”³⁶⁷. Then again in November of 1963, an angry violent throng of PCC supporters numbering up to 4,000 surrounded the Barbourfields Sports Stadium in Bulawayo shouting insults at the small group of ZANU supporters who had huddled together inside the Stadium to wait for the arrival of their leader, Rev. Ndabaningi Sithole. Sithole did eventually appear accompanied by heavy security and police protection:

³⁶³ Interview: JD1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 15/09/06 – (Female Ndebele activist advocating for women and refugee rights)

³⁶⁴ Couzens, T. (ed.) 1981. *Zimbabwe: The Search for Common Ground Since 1890 – From the pages of DRUM Magazine*. Harare: NatPrint, 101.

³⁶⁵ Couzens, T. (ed.) 1981. (Interview with Rev. Ndabaningi Sithole - October 1963): 187.

³⁶⁶ <http://www.bulawayo1872.com/history/nkomoj.htm> - (17/03/09).

³⁶⁷ Couzens, T. (ed.) 1981: 93.

“Sithole arrived with a formidable police escort, with all the windows of his car smashed and with one of his lieutenants in bandages. The little band [of followers] gave a ragged but jubilant cheer. Sithole explained amid the cheers that he had been stoned by ‘Nkomo thugs’ but in the true spirit of dedication had pressed on regardless.”³⁶⁸

4.4.1. Narratives of Externalisation: The Enemy from Without

Both Ndebele and Shona alike subscribe to a narrative of unity that existed in the early years of the liberation struggle before the split of ZANU from ZAPU in 1963.³⁶⁹ The Executive committees of each of the Nationalist Movement formations including ZAPU consistently included a mix of Shona and Ndebele, and the soldiers were recruited from both Matabeleland and Mashonaland. Dr. Joshua Nkomo, the founder and head of ANC, NDP, and ZAPU (as well as the PCC), was bequeathed with the title of ‘Father of Zimbabwe’ and was known to travel anywhere in the nation and draw large crowds in those early years.

“ But you know, I’ve heard a Shona name that they called him with. They called him “Chibwechitedza” or something like that. I think it is supposed to mean ‘a rock that slides’, you know, ‘a slippery rock’ basically. I’m not sure how he got that. You know, from my understanding it was that he was viewed as a national leader, and I think that’s how he viewed himself until his death. And he had a lot of support even from Mashonaland. My understanding is that the start of the Nationalist Movement, as I read his biography and all the other guys - it really was not based on tribal issues.”³⁷⁰

Thus, the bifurcated ethnic divide between ZANU (as Shona political party) and ZAPU (as an Ndebele political party) in their origins is for the most part discredited by historians. The evidence that there were both ethnic groups represented on the leadership of ZAPU and ZANU at the time of the divide and for many years afterwards speaks volumes.

“A lot of people would like us to believe that ZANU is a party that was formed for largely Shona people and that ZAPU was a political party for the

³⁶⁸ Ibid: 194-195.

³⁶⁹ After the formation of ZANU in 1963, Nkomo responded by launching the People’s Caretaker Council (PCC) that same year. However, ZAPU remained the primary reference point as the counterpart political party to the ZANU throughout the liberation struggle and up to 1987 with the signing of the Unity Accord between ZAPU and ZANU.

³⁷⁰ Interview: DN3, Johannesburg, South Africa – 30/10/07 – (Ndebele NGO peace worker facilitating trauma healing and reconciliation among rural Matabeleland communities and survivors of Gukurahundi violence).

predominantly Ndebele people. But a clear reading of history, which is not distorted, will tell you or will indicate that it was in actual fact ‘not like that’ – in that you actually had prominent people, some of them actually became prominent heroes, who occupied very senior positions in ZAPU but who not Ndebele. One name which quickly comes to my mind is James Chikerema. There were also people who occupied very important positions in ZANU-PF who are not Shona, but who were Ndebele. So, there was a deliberate effort to try to distort history to say – ZANU is for Shonas, ZAPU is for Ndebeles, which I find to be a distortion of history.”³⁷¹

However, according to Ndlovu-Gatsheni; the author and expert on African nationalism, Masipula Sithole suggests that there were some indications of ethnic conflict surfacing in the Nationalist movement as early as 1957:

“[Sithole] noted that at the formation of the first mass nationalist organization, the Southern Rhodesia African National Congress (SRANC) in 1957, the Ndebele-Shona axis emerged, manifesting itself in the words exchanged at the founding congress as well as in the structure established to lead the party. Conscious effort was made to achieve ethnic or regional balance between the Ndebele and Shona.”³⁷²

4.4.2. Narratives of Internalisation: The Enemy from Within

While the organizational scaffolding of the Zimbabwean Liberation Struggle was founded on a platform of unified ethnic representation, after the split of ZANU from ZAPU in 1963 a ‘natural’ ethnic rift began to occur. Most researchers speak of this as an unintentional consequence that unfolded as each of the two main liberation structures began to recruit and operate almost exclusively within the geographical locations of their own ethnic boundaries.

“...which leaves ZAPU now even more predominantly Ndebele than it happened in 1963; the few Shona that are there you see them moving out. This is not to say all the Shona moved out, no, but I think it’s a process of ‘Ndebele-isation’ of ZAPU. And so even when you have this Patriotic Front, its two parties, but what are they in essence? One is representing Shona side of things, the other one Ndebele. And even the infiltration itself. You’ll see ZAPU infiltrating largely from the North, from the West, and South-West, but ZANU perhaps enjoying a

³⁷¹ Interview: SD1, Johannesburg, South Africa - 18/08/2006 – (Shona Human Rights Lawyer).

³⁷² Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S. 2008: 43. See also, Sithole, M. 1995. “Ethnicity and Democratization in Zimbabwe: From Confrontation to Accommodation” in Glickman, H. (ed.) *Ethnic Conflict and Democratization in Africa*, Atlanta: The African Studies Association, and Sithole, M. 1999. *Zimbabwe: Struggles within the Struggle - Second Edition*. Harare: Rujeko Publishers.

bigger border. I know some people now don't even realise that ZAPU was there in Chimoio, all that area.”³⁷³

However, other views are much less forgiving on this ‘organic’ ethnic parting of ways and instead paint this split as a decided acting out of historic ethnic factionalism:

“So, the issue of the fact that the Ndebeles conquered the Shonas when they arrived...it was something brought on by the Shona intellectuals in the 60s. Because now it was okay, ZAPU has been formed, and they had recruited, it was both Shonas and Ndebeles who said, ‘okay, we need to fight the settlers. And...some among them said ‘no, are we going back to the 1800s now, being led by the same Ndebeles?, I mean come on. Let’s form our own party’. So they did split and form there own party.”³⁷⁴

Differing ideological and training allegiances (ZAPU/ZIPRA trained by the Russians and ZANU/ZANLA by the Chinese), with conflicting modes of operation in combat (ZIPRA emphasized conventional warfare and ZANLA guerrilla tactics) and opposing styles of relating to the rural peasant support base all fed the appetite of the ever-widening gap between the modes of operation of ZAPU and ZANU:

“...but for me, I hate ZANLA forces...even if I was very young. And even the whole village they used to kill. They used to burn the homestead, you know, they will burn the whole homestead. ‘So you people, you are supporting ZIPRA forces?’ They will burn, they will kill people. Even Ndebele-speaker being killed by someone who is a Shona. The wall of my property being burnt by a Shona. Sometimes they used to kill even the cattle, you know, these cows, they shoot. So you’ll come to the extent of thinking that ‘why does these ZIPRA forces not doing the same thing?’, ‘why is it this people that speak this other language, doing this to us?’ So to me that hatred...I think the ZANLA forces started by harassing, forcing people to speak their language, torturing people, forcing people to cook for them, beating old-aged people. So I think from there...I think I grew up with that.”³⁷⁵

“But the military which came from Mozambique and Zambia, we could tell that these people are not united, the ZIPRA and ZANLA. ZANLA forces will ask for food, especially meat, they wanted special food. But the ZIPRA forces will at anything that you have...if they found you had cooked something, they will eat with you there. And the ZANLA, they will have bases in the bush, in the mountains, then there children...young girls were raped. Because in the bush

³⁷³ Interview: PN1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 30/03/07- (Ndebele historian, author, researcher and archivist).

³⁷⁴ Interview: DL1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 11/08/06 – (Ndebele Journalist employed as a business editor for a prominent newspaper).

³⁷⁵ Interview: RM1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 14/09/06 – (Ndebele former security officer for opposition party and survivor of severe torture as a political prisoner under the ZANU-PF government).

there; they will have sitting rooms, bedrooms, kitchens. So in the bedrooms, only young girls will go to the bedrooms. Only girls, just imagine...young girls were raped. And with ZIPRA forces, they were not for bases, to take people from...eating with the girls, no. So we realized that this training is different; the ones coming from Mozambique...they used to torture people...destroying schools...ZIPRA was not destroying anything. And ZIPRA, they had discipline, they would 'propose' a girl, rather than ZANLA forcing."³⁷⁶

Within the above narrative paragraphs above, the reader uncovers traces of political ideologies that endorse fear and terror (force) as means of modifying the collective behaviour, the resultant production of 'enemy' mind-sets and a display of the gripping, emotive power of traumatic memory (including gender violence). This raw discourse begs the question, how can two closely aligned groups who supposedly share a common cause fall from the heights of unity (if ever attained) into the abyss of factional hatred and hostility? Ngwabi Bhebe captures a glimpse of the longer view in regard to the disordering effects of historical rivalry between the armed wings of both political movements even during the time of exile.

"The reader saw how ZAPU and ZANU followers started killing each other when they were dumped together at Mboroma by the Zambian authorities. The ZIPA [Zimbabwean People's Army] experiment in Mozambique collapsed for just that same reason. In Libya, ZAPU and ZANU were put in the same training camps and they killed each other. The reason was very simple. These young men and women were trained to hate each other by their leaders, who wanted to justify the separate existence of their parties. Each party had its own Commissariat Department, whose task was to teach recruits the history of the party, how the party was different from each other, who the leaders were and how they were different from the less revolutionary or sell-out leaders of the rival party. Thus, the cadres were brought up to hate."³⁷⁷

The open hostility between ZIPRA and ZANLA did not remain confined to the battlegrounds of exile. It resurfaced with a vengeance after the 1980 Independence in the military demobilisation camps.

"The first crisis that hit the post-colonial nation-building project had to do with ethnicity and integration of military forces. A crisis which began in the ranks of

³⁷⁶ Interview: JD1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 15/09/06 – (Female Ndebele NGO activist advocating or women and refugees rights).

³⁷⁷ Bhebe, N. 2004. *Simon Vengayi Muzenda and the Struggle for and Liberation of Zimbabwe*. Gweru, Zimbabwe: Mambo Press, 256. Note: For some scholars this explanation may be too simplistic. They would argue that the collapse of ZIPA was exceptionally more complicated than simply the result of historical rivalry.

the military, involving open exchange of fire between the triumphant and Shona-dominated ZANLA and the Ndebele-dominated ZIPRA in Connemara (Gweru) and Entumbane (Bulawayo)...³⁷⁸

These flash-points of violence in the demobilisation compounds will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5 of this study as part of the ‘Nationalist project’ of the ZANU-PF. This tragic ‘tale of two brothers’, ZAPU and ZANU who ended up becoming arch enemies beguiles a bitter story full of textual parody and irony.

4.4.3. Narratives of Introspection: The ‘Narcissism of Minor Difference’

This research suggests that the supposed Ndebele-Shona ‘ethnic’ fault-lines become even more blurred when inspected from the view of the sub-ethnic splintering that occurred within the respective Liberation movements. In her book on the assassination Herbert Chitepo³⁷⁹, Luise White outlines a series of internal ethnic power struggles (sometimes fatal) within the ZANU structures prior to independence in 1980. Speaking of the 1976 Report of the Chitepo Commission, set-up to investigate Chitepo’s death, White describes how this report served to debunk the image of a patriotic, unified political organisation that the exiled ZANU wanted to project itself as:

“But the *Report* of course described a very different ZANU, one that was a breakaway party itself, fractious, polarized, and distrusted by much of its leadership...the text itself depicts a time when ZANU was fragmented and weak, a party with at least one account of its own history that problematizes its ability to claim the blind obedience of voters.”³⁸⁰

The *intra*-ethnic power-mongering for representation and the intense vying for political positions among the Zezuru, Manyika, and Karanga on the ZANU leadership has become a political sub-text that rivals any *inter*-ethnic conflict between Ndebele and Shona.

“I don’t think he of all, in his wildest dreams, could ever think that he would actually get away with wiping out an ethnic group. I would say that Robert

³⁷⁸ Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S. 2008: 44.

³⁷⁹ Herbert Chitepo was the popular ZANU Chairperson and head of the High Command (Dare), who was killed by a car bomb in 1975 while living in exile in Lusaka, Zambia. It is not clear to this day who was actually responsible for this assassination as at least three different sources have been implicated at different times. The official line blames his death on the white Rhodesian and South African secret service while others have attempted to place the blame on Zambian government mercenaries and still others on internal factions within ZANU.

³⁸⁰ White, L. 2003. *The Assassination of Herbert Chitepo – Texts and Politics in Zimbabwe*. Cape Town: Double Storey Books, Bloomington: Indiana University Press and Harare: Weaver Press, 101.

Mugabe is more unhappy, more worried of Karangas, Manyikas, than he is of Ndebeles.”³⁸¹

“And as I went on in Zimbabwe I realized you can’t just group the Shona in one group, you had to look at the Manyikas, Karangas, Zezuru. But that took me much longer. I didn’t want to view things in an ethnic way but I realized that that’s just the way things are. And to understand things, ‘why ZANU-PF is acting this way’, you have to understand ...the rivalries between those different groups.”³⁸²

“If you have a look at the organogram of the Zimbabwean government, those pillars that matter most - there is Robert Mugabe, president, he’s a Zezuru and he’s the head of defence, and then there are the three most influential pillars, they are headed by Zezurus; Perence Shiri heads the air force... They are all Zezurus, and there is only one Karanga – Sibanda...”³⁸³

“Zimbabwe’s top hierarchy in the defence force is exclusively dominated by Mugabe loyalists that included General Solomon Mujuru, General Vitalis Zvinavashe, Air Marshall Perence Shiri and General Chiwenga... The most disturbing issue is that the majority of these men also hail from the Zezuru sub-Shona ethnic group where President Robert Mugabe comes from. This amplifies a worse form of ethnicisation of the military which is even more dangerous than politicisation.”³⁸⁴

Thus, while the socio-political meta-narratives of *inter*-ethnic conflict attempt to uphold a stark contrast between the Shona and Ndebele classification, the subjugated narratives of *intra*-ethnic conflict reveal a great deal of heterogeneity from within each particular ethnic grouping; a diversification of purposes often fraught with competing interests. Research now indicates that these *intra*-ethnic tensions can feed violence even between close-knit people groups who may have co-existed for many centuries, but for various reasons (historical traumas, revenge cycles, power struggles or protracted structural oppression) are now determined to divide and separate from each other. This kind of violent social ‘divorce’ is peculiarly disturbing because many of these groups that are

³⁸¹ Interview: JM1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 26/02/08 – (Shona Professor of Political Science in Zimbabwe).

³⁸² Interview: AM1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 10/08/06 – (White American Journalist who lived in Zimbabwe from 1980 until he was deported by the ZANU-PF government in 2003).

³⁸³ Interview: SM1, Durban, South Africa – 07/03/07 – (Ndebele teacher, researcher and university lecturer).

³⁸⁴ Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S. 2006. “Nationalist-Military Alliance and the Fate of Democracy in Zimbabwe”. *African Journal on Conflict Resolution*, 6 (1): 74.

fighting share the same racial and cultural-linguistic heritage. In such situations one finds the conflict nexus rests on the central theme of *similarity*, not *dissimilarity*.³⁸⁵

Michael Ignatieff most appropriately extrapolates on this notion in his writing on '*the Narcissism of Minor Difference*' a term he borrows from Sigmond Freud.³⁸⁶ The idea being that this kind of violent conflict can arise from a desperate attempt by two or more sub-ethnic groups to set themselves apart from each other. Forced division allows the antagonists a chance to dissociate from each other and the interdependencies that exist between them. This violent effort to extricate one group from the other is in order to try to prove their essentialist, unique identities; their extreme differences in protest to the homogenization of their historical past. However, to do this 'successfully' they have to exaggerate and magnify their *minor differences*. In the words of Luise White, "...mutinies are born of intimacy, not the intervention of outsiders."³⁸⁷

In order to disguise this intra-ethnic splintering within the ranks of a supposed unified political movement, ZANU had to mask its own disintegrating internal ethnic relations by creating an outside enemy (in this case ZAPU)³⁸⁸, which was a form of collective 'displaced aggression'³⁸⁹. This was not only effective in refocusing ZANU's energies externally; it temporarily brought about new levels of unity within the political organization, and prepared the way for ZANU to become the ultimate ruling party.

"For someone who is from the Matabeleland area, who is not a tribalist – like me, I am not a tribalist. I value the Shona and the Ndebele equally, I don't see someone who is lesser or second class, like that. So, it's very painful. I think Mugabe created the enemy between the two tribes so that he can keep on ruling; selecting few Ndebeles who are sympathetic to him, whom he can use to diffuse the situation in Matabeleland."³⁹⁰

³⁸⁵ Mann, M. 2005. *The Dark Side of Democracy – Explaining Ethnic Cleansing*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

³⁸⁶ Ignatieff, M. 1998. *The Warrior's Honour – Ethnic War and the Modern Conscience*. New York: Viking Publishers, 48.

³⁸⁷ White, L. 2003, 37.

³⁸⁸ While it would be important to mention that at least two major efforts were initiated to bring about ZAPU-ZANU unification (the formation of ZIPA - Zimbabwean People's Army in 1975 and Patriotic Front (PF) in 1976), both of them were imposed by pressure from the frontline states, both were rather quickly sidelined by the international stakeholders, and both were afforded only 'lip-service' by their top leaders and as such they failed to provide the scaffolding for a unified liberation struggle movement.

³⁸⁹ See Bar-On, D. 1999. *The Indescribable and the Undiscussable – Reconstructing Human Discourse after Trauma*. Budapest: Central European University Press.

³⁹⁰ Interview: RM1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 14/09/06 – (Ndebele former security officer for opposition party and survivor of severe torture as a political prisoner under the ZANU-PF government).

4.5. Ethnicity: Gukurahundi – Fatal Fusion of Ethnic Hatred and Severe Violence

There is amassed evidence from countless Matabeleland victims and survivor statements that the security forces (Fifth Brigade, ZNA, PISI and CIO)³⁹¹ deployed by the ZANU-PF ruling party crafted a well-articulated *ethnic hate-speech* to accompany and justify the severe violence unleashed on Matabeleland during the Gukurahundi period 1980-1987³⁹². What is not as clear is whether this special force (Fifth Brigade) was expressly trained to use ethnic hate speech as a tool of repression, fear and terror, or whether it was a ‘natural’ outgrowth of the highly divisive politicization that the ZANLA freedom fighters (now turned Fifth Brigade soldiers) had been ‘brain-washed’ to believe during the time of the Liberation Struggle.

“I really believe they were trained. What you normally do or need to understand about ZANU-PF is that; what basically happened in this particular instance is that they took anti- or racial-oriented people, who were anti-Ndebele, and made them the Commanders of this particular battalion that was supposed to go...that went to Matabeleland. And so we also believe that they had major prejudice against the Ndebeles.”³⁹³

“And I strongly believe the idea was to widen the gap between the Shona and Ndebele, because by-and-large the majority were Shona boys. In the ordinary mind of the Ndebele person, a Matabele person is, ‘it is the Shona who killed us’. Basically that is the thinking without really taking into cognizance of the setup of this Army, maybe even against the will of some of the Shona people. So, basically my views are; this was meant to divide, continuous divide and rule, because knowing well we are far more Shona people in the country than Ndebeles, without that ZANU-PF would not survive, as far as I’m concerned.”³⁹⁴

“And Gukurahundi itself, its command structures did have Ndebele people. There is one that I went to school with who was there, I think he was Captain Nyati, I’ve interviewed him and others. But, when it came to the deployment generally, they were using...there were no ZIPRA components, then they went as former-ZANLA police and highly politicized, and reporting directly to the President, he wasn’t reporting to the Army.”³⁹⁵

³⁹¹ ZNA (Zimbabwe National Army), PISI (Police Internal Security Intelligence), CIO (Central Intelligence Officers).

³⁹² In October of 1980, Prime Minister Mugabe entered into an agreement with North Korea to train the special Fifth Brigade of the Zimbabwean Army, and by December of 1987 the Unity Accord was signed by Joshua Nkomo and Robert Mugabe.

³⁹³ Interview: RM2, Johannesburg, South Africa - 26/02/08 – (Shona NGO peace activist advocating for trauma healing and reconciliation among rural Matabeleland communities and survivors of Gukurahundi violence).

³⁹⁴ Interview: AN1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 12/09/07 – (Ndebele Church Leader and Peace Activist).

³⁹⁵ Interview: PN1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 30/03/07 – (Ndebele historian, author and archivist).

“The perpetrators of violence, if I may put it that way, the soldiers, the 5th Brigade, what they were saying on the ground was to the effect that; they are ‘dealing with Ndebeles’, and killing them, and avenging what Ndebeles did to their own ancestors. So you can’t run away from that, you see. When people are killing you and saying ‘we are killing you because you are Ndebele’. Surely, how can you say there is no ethnicity issue there. It is there, because of what is happening, and therefore it has to be addressed, in a sense.”³⁹⁶

Operation Gukurahundi was defended by the ZANU-PF regime as a necessary means in defence against the national security threat posed by the counter-revolutionary, ex-ZIPRA/ZAPU ‘dissidents’ who having lost the elections were bent on overthrowing the newly elected democratic government of ZANU-PF. The resulting counter-narratives to this articulated official meta-narrative of ethnic conflict are myriad, complex and dangerous in implication. These various narratives of defiance will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter (five) of this study. What surfaced from this research is that many people on the ground in Matabeleland who were the direct or secondary victims / survivors of the violence of the 1980s refer to this as “genocide” or an exercise in Ndebele “ethnic cleansing” by the Shona.

“So it [ZANU-PF] was just saying ‘the Ndebeles are bad; and this was an ethnic minority, they wanted to take over the country, they are bad.’ So all that they were being told that ‘these are to be hated, they are animals’. So the term ‘Gukurahundi’ ...it means in Shona ‘you are weeding out the chaff’ or something like that.”³⁹⁷

“Now some of the things that happened, you see obviously the whole issue was to destroy the population of Matabeleland, which was part of an ethnic cleansing that was being done by the Shona people who had now come to power...So there fore it has been a ZANU feeling or the Shona feeling, expressing it through ZANU-PF, through the platform of ZANU-PF, because they are in power, to eliminate anyone who is not Shona...So it’s the Shona mentality of trying to eliminate anyone who is not Shona.”³⁹⁸

“Because the hatred between the Shona people and the Ndebeles is...we can concentrate on the Liberation Struggle to the early 80s...Mugabe sending in the

³⁹⁶ Interview: DN1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 29/03/07 – (Ndebele Church Leader whose father was killed by 5th Brigade soldiers in 1984).

³⁹⁷ Interview: GS1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 17/08/06 – (Shona Human Rights Lawyer and survivor of severe torture as a political prisoner under the ZANU-PF government).

³⁹⁸ Interview: FN1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 26/10/07 – (Ndebele Finance Manager and former employee of the ZANU-PF Ministry of Finance and the National Oil Company of Zimbabwe in the early 1980s).

North-Korean-trained 5th Brigade, I think that's where most of the Ndebele realized that Mugabe is really serious about finishing us off.”³⁹⁹

“...they [Shona] were here and they meant to kill all the Ndebeles. Why they didn't finish us, we don't know...no one was supposed to be alive at the end of the day, they all were supposed to be killed. So stories like that, when people hear them or when a soldier comes to you who speaks Shona and tells you that 'I'm here. I've been sent to kill you who's Ndebele'. Obviously, you believe that, that's where they are, they've come to kill you because you're Ndebele primarily...”⁴⁰⁰

“...they came, meaning the ZANU-PF 5th Brigade, and said, 'we are Shonas wanting to destroy the Ndebeles'. That language in itself was couched with such a violent ethos that the people themselves understood it to mean that the Ndebeles as a nation, were threatened, and they are going to be annihilated.”⁴⁰¹

Viewed within the historic context of multiple, protracted trauma, ethnic hate-speech coupled with severe state-sanctioned violence, restricted movement through the use of curfews and the denial of food aid during an intense time of drought⁴⁰², *the gravitation by many Matabeleland civilians toward embracing a genocide ideation as the motivational explanation for the ZANU-PF-sponsored Operation Gukurahundi is not surprising.* However, of even more concern are the ripple effects of consequences flowing out of this 'genocide' ideology. In the rest of this section, the following four ramifications of the enactment of cyclical revenge, the production of the language of hate, the undermining of ethnic origins and the inter-generational transmission of ethnic antagonisms will be debriefed.

4.5.1. Revenge Full Circle

After its landslide Election victory in 1980, ZANU-PF, although speaking the language of reconciliation initially, quickly resorted to the attitude of the 'winner takes

³⁹⁹ Interview: RM1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 14/09/06 – (Ndebele former security officer for opposition party and survivor of severe torture as a political prisoner under the ZANU-PF government).

⁴⁰⁰ Interview: DN3, Johannesburg, South Africa – 30/10/07 – (Ndebele NGO peace worker facilitating trauma healing and reconciliation among rural Matabeleland communities and survivors of Gukurahundi violence).

⁴⁰¹ Interview: RM2, Johannesburg, South Africa – 26/02/08 – (Shona NGO peace activist advocating for trauma healing and reconciliation among rural Matabeleland communities and survivors of Gukurahundi violence).

⁴⁰² Matabeleland is an arid environment which is prone to drought. In 1983 when the Gukurahundi violence was in full force the Region suffered a severe drought, however, due to the supposed security threats and the subsequent curfews and road blocks set up by ZANU-PF food aid was denied (or withheld) from the people of Matabeleland for inordinate periods of time.

all’ when rumblings from the opposition in Matabeleland began to stir. With the onset of ‘dissident’ activity in Matabeleland, the Fifth Brigade hastened to solidify its position of power by flexing its muscles of military and structural rule over Matabeleland. This adoption of a forceful system of hierarchical ranking (ZANU-PF over ZAPU) easily translated into a role-reversal (Shona over Ndebele) of the historic (Ndebele over Shona) ‘victor and vanquished’ narrative of the pre-colonial past. By resurrecting the ancient narrative of Ndebele raids of the 1800s as justification for killings of thousands of Ndebele civilians in the 1980s (estimated at 20,000), the Fifth Brigade sealed the long-held Ndebele suspicion that the Shona have always held a grudge and were awaiting the opportune time to strike back in revenge. In the eyes of the ordinary Ndebele civilian this resuscitating of the age old ethnic animosities of Ndebele injustices by the Gukurahundi violence (regardless of its intended or actual motivation) effectively brought Shona vengeance full circle. *The insinuation (both spoken and unspoken) is that the Matabeleland massacres represent a revenge of ‘genocide’ proportions exercised by Shona malcontents who resent that historically they have been ruled both politically and militarily by the Ndebele.*

4.5.2. Production of the Language of Hate

In order to eliminate the ‘dissidents’ and undercut the rural peasant support base for any dissident activity, the Fifth Brigade employed a language re-education programme that forced Ndebele civilians to speak and sing in Shona or they would be punished or even killed. The Ndebele peasants were coerced to sing and dance to Shona songs and to declare their allegiance and praise of the ZANU-PF and Robert Mugabe, while at the same time to denounce ZAPU and Joshua Nkomo in the Shona language. “This imposition of the Shona language is designed to kill other minority languages and language is a vehicle of a people’s culture. It simply means Shona culture is...imposed on us.”⁴⁰³ The residue of language oppression and its social constructivist power is evident in the following interview transcriptions:

“We were saying this has been very, very successful in many ways; that the Ndebeles actually believe that Shonas are their enemy. They also believe that Shonas actually hate the Ndebeles. So, they actually believed it even though the majority of Shonas could be innocent. It has also been successful in that sense that

⁴⁰³Khumalo, P.Z. 2006:9.

it has created animosity between two tribal groups...Without any doubt. The language itself...Let me give you a general world view. If you are in Matabeleland today and somebody shouts or speaks from the top of his voice, they will say, 'why do you speak like a Shona?' You see that in itself carries and it tells you what it is that they did."⁴⁰⁴

"I'm not sure whether it will be fair for me to quote my friend...when he went out preaching in the rural areas of Matabeleland, when some people suddenly realized that he was Shona, they kind of switched off. Until he began to check what exactly the problem was; they said 'the people who killed our parents, our relatives, spoke the language you are speaking.'"⁴⁰⁵

"Before this economic problem we never had a lot of Shonas crossing the border illegally, it was mostly people from Matabeleland, because they couldn't stand going to Harare and listening to Shona, the language that killed them. They'll rather be eaten by a crocodile in the Limpopo [river border crossing into South Africa], than be reminded of the people that killed your father or mother. So that's why I was saying we need the Shonas, you know, to understand and to believe and to respect our story."⁴⁰⁶

"It was something that was unfortunately taught 'at home', you know, it was in the home whereby you were told not to play with Shona kids, you know, that almost 'the people are killing us' you know, 'they want to wipe us out.' So that unfortunately was the issue that how we were taught. It was tough – it was tough for you to survive. I mean people could...I mean I remember you could be beaten up for speaking Shona. Because I think what happened is; there's lots of people who probably suffered a lot, who lost of their relatives, so what happens is – they hate the Shona. The Shona language maybe just evokes those memories, you know, they become emotional and just beat up a Shona-speaking person."⁴⁰⁷

The efficiency of this social production of the 'enemy' through the perpetration of ethnic-hate speech combined with severe violence is quite clearly exemplified above. The first speaker notes that the *tone of voice* (in this case shouting) is culturally associated with the Shona. Although the 'shouting' was the dominant manner in which the 5th Brigade soldiers most likely would have interacted with the Ndebele civilian population,

⁴⁰⁴ Interview: RM2, Johannesburg, South Africa - 26/02/08 – (Shona NGO peace activist advocating for trauma healing and reconciliation among rural Matabeleland communities and survivors of Gukurahundi violence).

⁴⁰⁵ Interview: AN1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe - 12/09/07 – (Ndebele Church Leader and Peace Activist).

⁴⁰⁶ Interview: DN3, Johannesburg, South Africa – 30/10/07 – (Ndebele NGO peace worker facilitating trauma healing and reconciliation among rural Matabeleland communities and survivors of Gukurahundi violence).

⁴⁰⁷ Interview: DL1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 11/08/06 – (Ndebele Journalist and business editor for a prominent newspaper).

it is now a trait (representing rudeness) equated with all Shona. The second and third speakers connect the *hearing of the Shona language* being spoken with the trauma of past violence. In one instance, the content of the Shona speaker (preacher) may have been harmless, even constructive, but for the traumatized rural peasant the actual sound of the language conjured up intrusive memories of pain. The fourth speaker builds the case for the *socialization of hate starting with the language used within the family*. In this situation because many Ndebele children were forbidden to speak the language of the ‘oppressor’ (Shona) and for that matter travel to Mashonaland, the language itself was cloaked in mystery and internalized as a foreboding evil linked with the horrific violence of the past. *In this way language was twinned with hatred scarring the socio-cultural landscape of unity among the diverse ethnic groups living in Zimbabwe today.*

“The most persistent charge against the brigade was that it dealt ruthlessly with people who could not speak Shona...this anti-Ndebele image of the Five Brigade took a firm grip of the imagination of the peasants.”⁴⁰⁸

4.5.3. Undermining Ethnic Origins

In his writing on the genocide of Rwanda, Mahmood Mamdani⁴⁰⁹ situates the ethnicity debate of that context not so much on the cultural or ethnic differences between Hutu and Tutsi, but squarely on the binary, politicized identities of *origins* – who is the *native* of the soil, and who is the *settler* (foreigner in the land)? This politicized, identity bifurcation between the ‘indigenous’ and the ‘alien’ did not spring up suddenly, it was a mind-set that was born out of, and incubated in the power-class struggles of the pre-colonial era, it was nursed and reinforced by colonial rule, and it was nurtured and solidified in the genocide memory of the past forty years.⁴¹⁰

Likewise in Matabeleland, a consequential outgrowth of the use of hate language during Gukurahundi was the fundamental undermining of the Ndebele origins and their sense of ‘rootedness’ as a people in the nation of Zimbabwe. The Fifth Brigade soldiers continually questioned the citizen status of the Ndebele and verbally reinforced the notion that the Matabele were foreigners, aliens in the land.

⁴⁰⁸ ‘Excited by the Five’, (1983) *The Chronicle (Bulawayo)* 09 October.

⁴⁰⁹ Mamdani, M. 2001: 14-15.

⁴¹⁰ Lemarchand, R. 1995. *Burundi: Ethnic Conflict and Genocide*. Cambridge: Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Cambridge University Press.

“The Ndebeles [were] the minority group that was almost defaced from this planet. So the use of coming...from, originating from South Africa...the psyche was that ‘these are not Zimbabweans, these are people who have come from somewhere else.’ So, either they die or they go back to South Africa.”⁴¹¹

“Like there’s always been this thing that ‘okay, okay, you guys come from South Africa, you’re not from here; so why should you rule this place. So that was the thing. The way it was done, it kind of all started in school maybe, whereby teachers were sent...they sent Shona teachers to Matabeleland, you know...”⁴¹²

“But somehow, I think it was thought that the Ndebele cannot rule Zimbabwe, because we are coming from the minority, one, the minority tribe. And then secondly, we are originally coming from South Africa, we are viewed as coming from South Africa. So therefore you see, you cannot have foreigners who are in the minority coming to rule this country.”⁴¹³

The bombardment of fierce interrogation in the past (1980s) and the cynical speculation in the present by the Shona regarding the Ndebele origins has contributed to two socio-political phenomena. Firstly, the Ndebele have constructed a socially imagined association with their Zulu origins and South Africa as a surrogate ‘motherland’. As one interviewee plainly states it, “I’m sure you know this that we actually consider ourselves to be part of South Africa in our minds...more than part of Zimbabwe.”⁴¹⁴ These sentiments have also fuelled the current debates in Matabeleland regarding federalism, secession and the ‘need’ for a separate Matabele nation state.

Secondly, the Ndebele identification with South Africa and their Zulu heritage has lead to a plethora of ethno-political conspiracy theories and analyses of Zimbabwe-South Africa relations. Commenting on the close relationship between Nelson Mandela of the ANC and Joshua Nkomo of the ZAPU one interviewee puts his analysis forward:

“...it’s an ethnic relationship that has always been there. You see it’s a relationship, although we are talking about Xhosas and the Zulus not getting hand

⁴¹¹ Interview: GS1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 17/08/06 – (Shona Human Rights Lawyer and survival of severe torture as a political prisoner under the ZANU-PF government).

⁴¹² Interview: DL1, Johannesburg, South Africa - 11/08/06 – (Ndebele Journalist and business editor for a prominent newspaper).

⁴¹³ Interview: FN1, Johannesburg, South Africa - 26/10/07 – (Ndebele Finance Manager and former employee with the ZANU-PF Ministry of Finance and the National Oil Company of Zimbabwe in the early 1980s).

⁴¹⁴ Interview: DN3, Johannesburg, South Africa - 30/10/07 – (Ndebele NGO peace worker facilitating trauma healing and reconciliation among rural Matabeleland communities and survivors of Gukurahundi violence).

in hand, although Mandela is a Xhosa, but there was generally an expression, you see, that we are Nguni's all of us and then we share a common language.”⁴¹⁵

Further, this same interviewee describes supposed links between the Zulu Chief Buthelezi of South Africa in relationship to the Matabeleland massacres in the early 1980s and the current prospects of a Zulu (Jacob Zuma) as the president of South Africa:

“However, you see what the Shonas are afraid of, it is the prospect of the Ndebeles discussing with their South African counterparts here and the Zulus coming together now to destroy the Shona people... You know Buthelezi is a Zulu. Buthelezi was totally against the things that Mugabe was doing, the atrocities that he was doing... During the atrocities then, Buthelezi was bitter and he then at some stage suggested he was going to train Ndebeles to give them... to arm them with arms to go and fight against Mugabe. Mugabe got to know this and he was very, very angry against Buthelezi. Now the prospect, you see of Jacob Zuma coming into power here in South Africa, him being a Zulu, is a thing of serious concern to the Mugabe government and the Shona people, because he is Zulu.”⁴¹⁶

This paragraph transcript opens up a glimpse into an Ndebele worldview that not only associates with South Africa and the Zulu nation but venerates Chief Buthelezi as the Zulu political leader by portraying him as an Ndebele ally who has taken the responsibility to protect the Ndebele nation and use his influence to shape the political power equation between South Africa and Zimbabwe. Above and beyond this, this speaker seems to equate ZANU-PF with ‘all’ Shona people, a generalization that often accompanies ethnic-essentialist thinking. This interviewee seems to indicate that by the mere fact that the ANC’s then presidential candidate Jacob Zuma is Zulu in ethnicity, the alliance between the current governments of South Africa and Zimbabwe will be seriously altered in favour of the Ndebeles over the Shona, and that the ZANU-PF will need to fear reprisals from the new South African government as due compensation for their past treatment of the Ndebele people.

4.5.4. Inter-Generational Transmission of Ethnic Antagonism

Of grave concern for those researching the impact of the Matabeleland violence of the early 1980s, is the apparent transmission of these ethnic animosities in both the

⁴¹⁵ Interview: FN1, Johannesburg, South Africa - 26/10/07 – (Ndebele Finance Manager and former employee of the ZANU-PF Ministry of Finance and the National Oil Company of Zimbabwe in the early 1980s).

⁴¹⁶ Ibid.

Ndebele and Shona communities to the next generation with an unwitting degree of emotional veracity and fervent antagonism. This inter-generational transfusion of hate is even more alarming when it is discovered to be emerging in diverse social sectors outside of the parameters of politics, such as in the media and entertainment industry, the arts and culture (music, drama and dance) and sports arenas.

“I was amazed the other day on the 22nd of January which has now been officially declared by the victims to be the Gukurahundi Day; the people organizing that occasion were very young people, very, very young people who never really experienced Gukurahundi. If they were there, it was when they were still [young] they’ve been hearing the stories. So if they are the people who are going to spearhead the commemoration, then what does that mean to the future generations that will remain; the unfinished, unsolved curse.”⁴¹⁷

This narrative of ethnic animosity surfaced with a vengeance (from young patriotic ZANU-PF members) during the internet debates that resulted from the 1997 release of *‘Breaking the Silence’*⁴¹⁸, a detailed documentation of the violence unleashed on Matabeleland in the 1980s. What was surprising to the researchers who were analyzing this Internet debate was the degree to which people were willing to emotively justify the overriding narrative interpretation propagated by ZANU-PF ten years earlier, and not only that, express deep sentiments of ethnic prejudice and hatred in the process. One must bear in mind that many of these respondents were young professionals and self-consciously saw themselves as future leaders in Zimbabwe.⁴¹⁹ A vivid case in point follows in a direct quote from a Shona respondent:

“The extermination of the support base, although unfortunate, was one of the alternatives that worked. I sympathise with the victims, but for the victors it was a question of life and death as well... Was dissidency necessary? Was it anybody’s fault that you [the Ndebele] lost elections? Was that the only option? Now...the strategies...decided to hammer the support base and you cry for a human rights inquiry. Do you want us to also cry for a human rights inquiry for the [nineteenth century] warriors (thieves) who roamed Mashonaland?...Our [the Shonas’] only sin was that we toiled the soil and had better produce. Don’t the

⁴¹⁷ Interview: JN1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe - 29/03/07 – (Ndebele teacher and activist working for the Catholic Commission on Peace and Justice – CCJP in the 1980s).

⁴¹⁸ Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) and Legal Resources Foundation (LRF). 1997. *Breaking the Silence – Building True Peace: A Report on the Disturbances in Matabeleland and the Midlands 1980-1988*. Harare: CCJP / LRF.

⁴¹⁹ Alexander, J & McGregor, J. 1999. Representing Violence in Matabeleland, Zimbabwe: Press and Internet Debates, in Allen, T. & Seaton, J. (Eds.) *The Media of Conflict: War Reporting and Representations of Ethnic Violence*, London & New York: Zed Books, 248.

Matabeles beat their chests with pride for having stolen Mashona produce, women and children[?].”⁴²⁰

*The insinuation here (both spoken and unspoken), being that the Matabeleland massacres perpetrated by the ZANU-PF (Shona majority) government in the 1980s represent a justified revenge for the Ndebele raids in Shona territories in the 1800s.*⁴²¹

For the Ndebele youth, sporting events (in this case soccer) have functioned as a public place in which they could diffuse their pent-up malcontent on their Shona counterparts. The sports field and stadium provide a bounded area yet one that supplies a sufficiently physical and competitive space in which to express and find release from explosive emotions of rage: “An inherited hatred of the Shona people is portrayed in soccer matches through songs that make reference to the 1980s genocide. A popular one goes like, ‘Curse the Shonas who killed my father.’”⁴²² Other interview transcripts agree:

“But unfortunately the politics of Ndebele and Shona, it still haunts everyone in every organization in Zimbabwe. It’s everything. It even goes to the sports...So what they have done in Matabeleland is they have just turned to the soccer team, Highlanders. I mean for them, you know, they will tell you it’s an arena where they are able to express their anger, because if you sit in the crowd you’ll hear all sorts of obscenities against the Shonas.”⁴²³

“Well, (sigh) what I have discovered is that soccer matches actually present Ndebele people with a safe environment to vent their frustration and anger towards the Shonas...They would be singing songs that are insulting to Shonas, you know. They turn to traditional songs and one of them is...I think it used to be a war song but basically part of the lyrics go like, ‘here are the Shonas killing me’... ‘Please intervene, here are the Shonas, they’re killing me.’”⁴²⁴

Refusing to be confined to the spheres of diplomatic intrigue or the annals of historic archives, the angry voices of the next generation of secondary victims from the Matabeleland massacres persist in seeking out other social settings of mutinous expression.

⁴²⁰ Alexander, J. & McGregor, J. 1999: 249.

⁴²¹ This insinuation gained increased credence after the release of a document threatening Ndebele genocide written anonymously under the title of ‘*The Inner Circle*’ in 1979 and recirculated again in the 1990s.

⁴²² This quote is taken from hand-written notes responding to this research proposal made by Zimbabwean (Ndebele) friend and colleague who grew up in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. (November 2005).

⁴²³ Interview: DL1, Johannesburg, South Africa - 11/08/06 – (Ndebele Journalist and business editor for a prominent newspaper).

⁴²⁴ Interview: DN3, Johannesburg, South Africa - 30/10/07 – (Ndebele NGO peace worker facilitating trauma healing and reconciliation among rural Matabeleland communities and survivors of Gukurahundi violence).

“...because the way you sit, what I’ve seen them do is; maybe the Shona guys would support the other team, sit on the other side, and they will just be a minority. And all they can do is just hope maybe ‘it’s a draw, or their team loses’. Cause if their team wins, then coming out of there is going to be war, it’s going to be war. I mean [they] just vent their anger on you. So it’s been elevated to the status of a count, it’s like a rallying point for Ndebeles now that ‘okay, we’ll rally around this team because we have lost faith in all political institutions.’”⁴²⁵

“ So yes, so I’m saying it’s paradoxical in the sense that they’re singing about Shonas, but there are Shonas that they know are playing for Highlanders, they don’t really regard them as Shonas...As far as the Ndebeles are concerned, Highlanders is the last institution that they have, you know, that belongs to them as Ndebeles. Everything else has been taken away from them including their jobs, including their country, or should I say the part of their province because, you know, you will find Shonas in all the positions and they are subservient to them. So, it’s all tied in to, you know, to the issues...into history, particularly after Independence.”⁴²⁶

Here, in the above treatises one sees the irrationality of ethnic-hatred when Ndebele fans of the Highlanders can be aroused to sing songs of prejudice and violence against the Shona people, while at the same time being fully aware those Shona players make up part of that team. Also, when dealing with the issue of ethno-sports, it is of interest to note that the polarizing narrative of the Ndebele-Shona segregation is exceptionally caught up in the discussion of ownership or ‘faith’ in a political process and its institutions. *For Matabeleland, as long as there is no public political domain made available for the collective emancipatory venting of historical pain, the children of the survivors of Gukurahundi will continue to nurse their rage; allowing vengeance to simmer just underneath the tentative veneer of social sensibilities.*

4.6. Conclusion: Ethnicity – Disentangling Identity Formation

Placing ethnicity in the context of political-economic currency, Masipula Sithole argues for four hypotheses that heightened ethnic salience in Zimbabwe: First, if the rate of economic growth declines, ethnic identity will become more salient. Second, if political change becomes more likely, then the salience of ethnic identity will increase.

⁴²⁵ Interview: DL1, Johannesburg, South Africa - 11/08/06 – (Ndebele Journalist and business editor for a prominent newspaper).

⁴²⁶ Interview: DN3, Johannesburg, South Africa - 30/10/07 – (Ndebele NGO peace worker facilitating trauma healing and reconciliation among rural Matabeleland communities and survivors of Gukurahundi violence).

Third, if spatial mobility of one ethnic group into the territory of the other increases, then ethnic salience will rise. Fourth, if social mobility of one ethnic group into the occupational domain of the other rises, then ethnic salience will rise.⁴²⁷ All four of these principled dynamics are recognisable in the historic time-line of ethnic-identity relations and formations outlined in this chapter.

Summarizing the work of leading anthropologist John Comaroff, Professor Ndlovu-Gatsheni posits five theoretical propositions to better understand the nature and formation of ethnic identity:

1. Ethnicity is constructed by specific historical forces which are simultaneously structural and cultural.
2. Ethnicity is never a unitary phenomenon because it describes both a set of relations and mode of consciousness that is ever changing.
3. Ethnicity has its origins in the asymmetric incorporation of structurally dissimilar groupings into a single political economy.
4. Ethnicity tends to take on the ‘natural’ appearance of an autonomous force and a ‘principle’ capable of determining the course of social life.
5. Ethnicity could be perpetrated by actors quite different from those that caused its emergence and could also develop a direct and independent impact on the context in which it arises.⁴²⁸

Bearing in mind Sithole and Comaroff’s propositions on ethnicity above, certain streams of Matabeleland ethnic-identity narratives reveal and confirm a number of essential points which are well-substantiated in the interview transcriptions and the document analysis engaged in for this research. These are as follows:

- **Ethnic Identity is not static, it is often in flux** – For example, a Zulu Clan of approximately 300 persons referred to as the Khumalos' evolved into a conglomerate Kingdom of the Umthwakazi (now referred to as the Ndebele people) and consists of over ten different incorporated ethnic groups including Sotho, Tswana, Shangaan, Venda, Tonga and Shona ethnicities. Likewise, the Shona delineation is a relatively recent ethnic classification as a canopy label

⁴²⁷ Sithole, M. 1985. “The Salience of Ethnicity in African Politics: the Case of Zimbabwe”. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, XX, 3-4: 185-187.

⁴²⁸ Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S. 2008: 31-32. See Comaroff, J. 1997. Of Totemism and Ethnicity: Consciousness, Practice and the Signs of Inequality, in Grinker, R & Steiner, C. (eds.) *Perspectives on Africa: A Reader in Culture, History, and Representation*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

which covers at least seven other historically distinct sub-ethnic formations including Korekore, Zezuru, Manyika, Ndau, Rozvi, Kalanga, and Karanga.

- **Ethnic Identity is pluralistic, not monolithic** – For instance, both the Ndebele and Shona ethnic groups historically consist of networks of diverse linguistic dialects, clearly defined cultural classes and internal ‘ranking’ structures. Through language disassociation, inter- or cross-clan marriage, name change or certain economic rituals and transactions one could ‘move’ among and between these various class and ranking systems.⁴²⁹ During the Gukurahundi period, some Ndebele took on Shona names as a form of protection and of political survival in the face of direct violence perpetrated against the Ndebele as the ‘opposition’ (ZAPU).

“And all the sudden Uncle Joe and ZAPU were persona non grata, and all of a sudden we were concerned as a family that ‘are we gonna be connected to Uncle Joe?’, because he was called Msika. He chose to keep the original Shangaan name, my dad and his older brothers decided to keep the Shona version of it – Musikavanhu – which is the version I use to this day out of respect for my father, but the real name is actually Msika. And...so that kept us safe because not everyone made the connection between Msika and Musikavanhu.”⁴³⁰

- **Ethnic Identity is often manipulated by historical conflict memory and political opportunism** - The dominant ‘colonial narrative’ was founded on evolutionary prejudice and dehumanizing contempt toward the African populations in general (both Ndebele and Shona) as well as through a system of ranking the different African peoples by privileging (through special treatment and relationship assumptions) between certain ethnic groupings; in this case Ndebele over Shona. This ‘white man’s’ narrative has been refuted by the voices of new historicism and through the continuation of rapid changes in the geo-political landscape (both relationally and structurally) as independent Africa positions itself in the global scene across a myriad of racial and ethnic lines. *However, the post Independence African government (ZANU-PF) and its security forces have carefully crafted the same instruments and tactics of inter- and intra-*

⁴²⁹ Lindgren, B. 2004: 179.

⁴³⁰ Interview: TM1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 01/11/07 – (Shona Businessman whose relative was a prominent leader in the ZANU-PF government).

ethnic conflict, stereotyping and hatred in order to subdue any threat (either political or military opposition) from whomever they perceive as their political enemy.

- **Conflict identity is often formulated around the psychology of victor ('legitimated' offender) and vanquished (the offended)** For instance, there is a distinctly proud Ndebele association of ZAPU with the military prowess of its armed wing, ZIPRA when it successfully shot down the Viscount, a Rhodesian tourist airplane coming from Victoria Falls. This incident, which required the use of state-of-the-art Russian weaponry (ground launched anti-aircraft missiles) is used as indicative 'proof' that ZANU-PF and its armed wing ZANLA were actually militarily threatened by ZIPRA which serves as another tangential explanation for the Gukurahundi violence of the 1980s. This military sophistication of ZIPRA is in turn is linked historically to the Ndebele being a military nation, superior in the strategies of war to the Shona.⁴³¹
 - **Overemphasis of one dimension of identity can exacerbate conflict** - In neglecting the many facets that make up identity one runs the risk of narrowing identity to one salient feature of crucial importance. When this singular yet overemphasized identity collides with the singular yet overemphasized identity of the 'other' (the enemy) conflict escalates. For example, the ZANU-PF label of 'dissident' became associated with Matabeleland, the geographical area where the Gukurahundi violence was concentrated resulting in the notion that being an Ndebele is equated with being a 'dissident'.

“That’s what they were told. ‘Ndebeles are dissidents’. So if Ndebeles are dissidents, get rid of them. I’ve heard of stories of the Fifth Brigade ripping open women’s bellies who were pregnant and they want to see this dissident inside.”⁴³²

⁴³¹ Unrecorded interview: BN1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 31/03/07 – (Ndebele Commercial Farmer, businessman, and agricultural consultant). This respondent was referring to the highly secretive ZERO PLAN HOUR in which ZIPRA was apparently poised to invade Rhodesia with a full-scale conventional army on the brink of the peace talks in 1979. See also: Brickhill, J. 1995. Daring to Storm the Heavens: the Military Strategy of ZAPU 1976-1979, in Ranger, T., and Bhebe, N. (eds.) *Soldiers in Zimbabwe’s Liberation War*. London: James Currey, 48-86.

⁴³² Interview: DN3, Johannesburg, South Africa – 30/10/07 – (Ndebele NGO peace worker facilitating trauma healing and reconciliation among rural Matabeleland communities and survivors of Gukurahundi violence).

“My wife has been a member of the Zanu (PF) village committee, the lowest level of Zanu. You know that everyone in the area has been forced to join Zanu... I am Ndebele, of course.”⁴³³

This latter quote above vividly illustrates this identity *confusion* and politico-identity *fusion* whereby the Shona ethnic identity is so deeply equated with ZANU-PF political party that the speaker disassociates from the ZANU-PF by referring to himself as an Ndebele, not a member of ZAPU, the opposition political structure to ZANU-PF.

In summary, this exploration of the narratives of ethnic identity indicates that the ethnic distinctions assigned to Matabeleland are not by nature essentialist scripts. The pre-colonial and colonial ethnic definitions and demarcations between the Ndebele and Shona were frequently blurred and remain as cloudy logics throughout Zimbabwe’s history up to the present. Likewise, from its genesis the nationalist liberation movement of Zimbabwe was not an ethnically purist project. It was for many years a configuration of different solidarities coalescing around pertinent issues of resistance. However, in the advent of the symbiotic blending of unbridled power-mongering, militant exclusivity and the manufacture of the ‘enemy’ along the existing natural ethnic cleavages of geographical and political associations, an ethnic segregation was produced in Zimbabwe. This divergent ethnic construction crystallised when the narrative texts of ethnic hatred and severe state-sanctioned violence fused together in the ZANU-PF’s disastrous management of the ‘dissident’ and Gukurahundi violence in the early 1980s. For the vast majority of victims and survivors of the Matabeleland massacres (1980-87) the following historic orations of Robert Mugabe ring hollow: “Our war must teach us to forget our tribal affiliations. If it fails in this regards, it will have achieved nothing.”⁴³⁴

⁴³³ Berkeley, B. and Schrage, E. 1986. *Zimbabwe: Wages of War: A Report on Human Rights*. New York: Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, 56-57.

⁴³⁴ Mugabe, R. 1983. *Our War of Liberation – Speeches, Articles, Interviews 1976-1979*. Harare: Mambo Press, 125.

Chapter 5: Nationalism – Ordering and Disordering Narratives

5.1. Introduction: Betwixt and Between – The African Nation-State in Limbo

“Power corrupts in a thousand details of hypocrisy and indifference.”⁴³⁵

Defining the contemporary African nation-state is a fluid exercise both conceptually and practically. Since the beginnings of independence from colonial rule, the formulations of nationhood in the African context remain highly contested terrains. The historical evolution of Africa’s nation-state development reads as a continuous analogue of the ‘rise and fall’ of empires across the continent. Ali Mazrui compares the African nation-state to a political refugee:

“The African state shares characteristics with the refugees it helps to create. Most African states are artificial, and both the states and the refugees are fundamentally without roots. The rootlessness and artificiality of the African state are attributable to its colonial origins and its artificial boundaries. The rootlessness of individual refugees is based on the postcolonial political traumas of disruption and displacement.”⁴³⁶

For sure, the nation-state project in Africa has been riddled with peculiarities and complexities. In her stimulating work on ‘theatres of struggle’ in South Africa, Belinda Bozzoli spoils the hegemony of the call to a unified nationalism in Africa and significantly infuses it with thickening stratification:

“Unable to resort to the ethnic romances or religious legends which underlie many other nationalisms, African nationalists have variously identified the nation as synonymous with other things. One is ‘blackness’, a quality said to be innate but requiring purification and emancipation from the white contamination and control (as in Black Consciousness and Black Power movements). Another is a primordial ‘innocence’, which requires liberation from modernity’s corrupting influence (as in Africanist movements). A third is ‘martyrdom’, which is said to lead to a suppressed and barely contained anger, and which requires violent retribution (as in militaristic revolutionary movements, often with Fanonist influence). Another is ‘rightlessness’ (as in most anti-colonial franchise-based movements) and another ‘populism’, in which large and intractable forces (the

⁴³⁵ Quote by Terence Ranger in Todd, J. 2007. *Through the Darkness – A Life in Zimbabwe*. Cape Town: Zebra Press (back cover).

⁴³⁶ Mazrui, A. 1995. “The African State as Political Refugee”, in Smock, D. & Crocker, C.(eds.) *African Conflict Resolution – The U.S. Role in Peacemaking*, Washington D.C.: USIP Press, 9.

state, money, Jews, whites) control and manipulate the small man and must be brought down (also present in anti-colonial movements).”⁴³⁷

Africa carries an uneven share of the unique challenges and diverse struggles attached to the creation and maintenance of modern nation-states. First, the shedding of direct colonial oppression is a relatively recent history as compared to many other parts of the world. Second, the demarcation of ethno-political, economic and geographical boundary-setting⁴³⁸ was an externalised, detached phenomenon masterminded by far away European colonialists, fraught with dubious motivations and ill-gotten gain, and most important of all with no markings of the organic evolutionary process of ‘ownership’ in the national consciousness experienced in other locations. Third, in the colonial race for the ‘spoils of Africa’, a comprehensive exploitation of land⁴³⁹, mineral reserves⁴⁴⁰ and human resources was undertaken leaving in its wake a landless peasantry, a depleted natural wealth and a disenfranchised people locked in a semi-feudal system of class struggle and elite cooption.⁴⁴¹ Fourth, in the fragility of its newly born independence, Africa’s vulnerable nation-states were quickly embroiled in, abused and discarded as pawns in the posturing and brinkmanship of East-West geopolitical Cold-war politics. Zimbabwe’s nationalist movement grew out of the turmoil and torrent of all of these obstacles, land being but just one nascent example:

⁴³⁷ Bozzoli, B. 2004. *Theatres of Struggle and the End of Apartheid*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 207.

⁴³⁸ Clapham, C., Herbst, J. & Mills G. (eds.) 2006. *Big African States – Angola, Sudan, DRC, Ethiopia, Nigeria, South Africa*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press. See also Herbst, J. 2000. *States and Power in Africa – Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press. Herbst detours from the ‘glorified’ treatise of good governance in pre-colonial Africa: “Herbst’s bold contention – that the conditions now facing African state-builders existed long before the European penetration of the continent...runs counter to the prevailing assumption that colonialism changed everything. In identifying how the African state-building process differs from the European experience, Herbst addresses the fundamental problem confronting African Leaders: how to extend authority over sparsely settled lands. Indeed, efforts to exert control over vast, inhospitable territories of low population density and varied environmental and geographical zones have resulted in devastating wars, millions of refugees, and dysfunctional governments perpetrating destructive policies” (back cover).

⁴³⁹ Hart, G. & Sitas, A. 2004. “Beyond the urban-rural divide: linking land, labour, and livelihoods”. *Transformation Journal: Critical Perspectives on Southern Africa*, Issue 56.

⁴⁴⁰ Hochschild, A. 1998. *King Leopold’s ghost: a story of greed, terror, and heroism in colonial Africa*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Publishers.

⁴⁴¹ Mamdani, M. 1996. *Citizen and Subject – Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press. See also Bayart, J. 1993. *The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly*. London: Longmans Publishers, and Guest, R. 2004. *The Shackled Continent – Africa’s Past, Present and Future*. London: Macmillan Press.

“Even before the settlers and imperial troops put down the uprisings of 1896-7 some 15,000,000 acres of the country’s total of 96,000,000 acres had been expropriated from the Africans without any form of compensation. By 1898 an estimated 38 per cent of the total population of Matabeleland had been forced into reserves.”⁴⁴²

“In April 1980, when independence was won, close to 6,000 white commercial farmers owned 15.5 million hectares or 45 percent of the most productive land. Small-scale, mainly black farming families (8,500) had 5 percent in the drier regions, and 700,000 black families owned the remaining 50 percent in low rainfall areas with very poor soil fertility.”⁴⁴³

There is a stream of ‘afro-pessimist’ thinking that approaches Africa’s precarious nation-building condition as a failed project. Unable to understand why Africa has not embraced the so-called ‘universal’ neo-functionalist (neo-colonial) agenda of western politico-judicial democratisation, progressive development and free market economies, these doomsday prophets have abandoned Africa to what they predict as a dangerous slippery slide into the dark abyss of chaos and disorder.⁴⁴⁴ However, in contrast to this view there are the ‘afro-optimists’ who maintain that Africa has *not* had a genuine opportunity to truly take full control of its own destiny and development as a continent. These Africa-advocates do not see the current nation-state crisis as a sign of apocalyptic demise. Instead they interpret this time of upheaval and rapid social change as a transitional phase, a new birth from the ashes of colonial structures that were never truly demolished in the mad rush for independence across Africa. Certain scholarship has even suggested that a new paradigm of “*the political instrumentalization of disorder*”⁴⁴⁵ as a governance model is emerging in Africa.

For while the independence struggles brought varied degrees of social freedom, colonialism remained in the vestiges of economic and governmental-political structures that were imported, self-serving and in multiple ways un-African in value. It has taken a

⁴⁴² Martin, D. & Johnson, P. 1981. *The Struggle for Zimbabwe*. Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 51.

⁴⁴³ Todd, A. 2007. “A Chronicle of Land”. *The Black Scholar – Journal of Black Studies and Research*. 37 (1): 21.

⁴⁴⁴ Kaplan, R. 1994. “The Coming Anarchy”. *Atlantic Monthly*, February.

⁴⁴⁵ Chabal, P. & Daloz, J. 1999. *Africa Works – Disorder as Political Instrument*. (The International African Institute). Oxford: James Currey Press and Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press. Chabal & Daloz develop their ‘disorder as political instrument’ notion by exploring three trends in Africa: The informalization of politics, the re-traditionalization of society, and the productivity of economic failure.

generation (30-40 years since independence) to realise that these inherited governance systems will not work in Africa, and so the dragon of colonial, structural violence rears its ugly head as it heaves its last breath over Africa.⁴⁴⁶ For the afro-optimist, out of this seeming quagmire arises a Phoenix; a re-birthing of all that is truly African in the public and private realms of life. In the words of Ali Mazrui:

“The question that has arisen recently is whether real decolonization is not winning formal independence but the collapse of the colonial state itself. It is not changing the guard, raising the flag, and singing the new national anthem while leaving the old structures intact. Rather, it is the cruel and bloody disintegration of colonial structures. Decolonization should no longer be equated with political liberation.”⁴⁴⁷

Hence, it is the firm belief of many Africa scholars that unless or until the nation-state scaffolding imposed on Africa by the colonial powers and embraced by most of the African independence leaders (either in word and/or in policy action) is intentionally deconstructed, and then reconstructed in alignment with innovative African-sensitive structures of political governance and social collaboration, post-independent Africa’s forays into replicating Western nationalisms will continue to fail.⁴⁴⁸ *The proof of ‘nationalism’ is tested at the intersection of a shared collective identity affiliation (common values) and its fusion with the socio-political structures institutionalised by the nation’s decision makers in order to reinforce that particular corporate identity and values.*

5.2. Managing the Nationalist Discourse: From Revolt to Rule

The rhetoric of revolutionary nationalism is powered by guiding narratives of political ideology and *world-views* (how the world is seen to be ordered). World-view narratives serve the purpose of giving their adherents a congruency by delineating a vision for the *future*, a strategic direction in the *present*, and clarity of meaning from the *past*. In her fascinating study on the violent stand-off between the US government forces and the Branch Davidians religious cult in Waco, Texas (USA), Jayne Docherty explores the components of ‘world-viewing’ narratives. Docherty proposes five questions that

⁴⁴⁶ Ayittey, G. 1998. *Africa in Chaos*. New York: St. Martins Press. See also Ayittey, G. 1992. *Africa Betrayed*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

⁴⁴⁷ Mazrui, A. 1995: 11.

⁴⁴⁸ Davidson, B. 1992. *The Black Man’s Burden: Africa and the Curse of the Nation-State*. New York: Times Books.

form the basis of our world-views: what is real and true? (*ontology*), how is “the real” organized? (*logic*), what is valuable or important? (*axiology*), how do we know about what is or exists? (*epistemology*), and how should we act? (*ethics*).⁴⁴⁹ Worldviews spin a necessary web of coherence for life. Thus, the power of the liberationist-nationalist scripts used in Zimbabwe’s struggle for independence is precisely in their provision of the critical function of ordering reality for those living under oppression.

However, when conflicting world-views collide Docherty expresses caution, “As long as the focus is on order, there may be a built-in bias toward the assumption that order involves the imposition of a single, hegemonic worldview.”⁴⁵⁰ In Zimbabwe, the ordering script of revolutionary freedom provided a binding vision with centrifugal pull for all the various interests represented in the Struggle movement. However, with the peace negotiations brokered by international third-parties the ordering nature of the text was beginning to blur, and when independence was realized and ZANU-PF entered the elections independent of ZAPU, the ordering script of liberation splintered. Catapulted into political power through a sweeping victory in the polls, ZANU-PF as the ruling party desperately needed an ordering narrative that would translate the revolutionary rhetoric into a national narrative and thereby hold together the diversity of national interests being expressed in the democratic space that opened up after independence. Unable to differentiate between ‘ordering’ as the unquestioning obedience required in waging a successful military revolution and ‘ordering’ as a form of containment that is able to co-exist with a variety of viewpoints, the ZANU-PF hoisted its own world-view (mono-narrative) on the nation: “ZANU-PF has set itself the task of establishing a hegemonic project in which the party’s narrow definition of the nation is deployed against all other forms of identification and affiliation.”⁴⁵¹

5.2.1. The Tidiness of Revolutionary Scripts

The ZANU liberation movement had relatively tight control on the ‘ordering’ ideological narrative which gave them discipline and guidance throughout the struggle

⁴⁴⁹ Docherty, J. 2001. *Learning Lessons from Waco – When the Parties Bring their Gods to the Negotiation Table*. New York: Syracuse University Press, 50-51.

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid: 57.

⁴⁵¹ Raftopoulos, B. 2004. “Nation, Race and History in Zimbabwean Politics”. A paper presented at the University of Edinburgh’s Centre of African Studies International Conference on *States, Borders and Nations: Negotiating Citizenship in Africa*. May 2004.

movement. A descriptive appeal for the ‘ordering’ narrative is well-articulated in the words taken from a speech delivered by Robert Mugabe in 1979:

“...political and ideological consciousness must, as it enhances our great understanding and appreciation, also invoke in us unswerving loyalty to the Party and the just cause it champions. The Party charts the political and ideological line which must provide us, if we are its loyal and faithful members, with the only correct direction worth following and the only valid basis on which we can all become united as fighters with a common cause...[this] prompts within each true member an inner sense of order and orderliness that dictates conformity in behaviour and regulates our inter-actions and relationships with each other as revolutionaries bound by the same objectives.”⁴⁵²

This rhetoric was not only in words, it was acted upon wherever there appeared to be any mutiny within the ranks of ZANU / ZANLA: “Through the war, we have submerged whatever minor contradictions have existed among us and we have done so out of our recognition of the need to completely destroy the common principle enemy in pursuance of our immediate common objective – the establishment of a national democratic state.”⁴⁵³ In this script one immediately identifies the contradiction between the ‘means’ (to submerge by force any minor differences) and the ‘ends’ (in order to build a democratic nation). Also, here is a phraseology that is bound by the discourse of a monolithic enemy assuming that all the oppressed masses comprehend and agree on a hegemonic image of their ultimate foe (in this case the white Rhodesian government and its people).

The notion of a tidy revolutionary script is not to insinuate that there were no deviations of thought or defiance in action against the dominant ZANU narrative during the time of the struggle. It is to say, however, that the management (cause and effect) of the public and private scripts was notably different. The *public* narrative expounded by the ZANU leadership not only attempted to propagate one text (one way of thinking for all) it demanded solidarity both in word and deed from the popular domain (among the masses) in order to fortify its ‘united patriotic front’. Writing about the Geneva Conference, a failed attempt at a negotiated Zimbabwean peace settlement in 1976, David Moore states:

⁴⁵² Mugabe, R. 1983. *Our War of Liberation – Speeches, Articles, Interviews 1976-1979*. Harare: Mambo Press, 146.

⁴⁵³ Ibid: 128.

“In fact the conference served only to help the relatively unknown Mugabe. In the hotels and halls of Geneva – paid for, of course, by the imperialists – he patched together an alliance of Zimbabwean nationalists and convinced the west he controlled ZANU’s soldiers. In 1977, with the failure of the conference and the newly elected Carter regime [USA] in confusion about matters Zimbabwean (they thought Muzorewa was worthy of support) the British tried to start an election. However, Mugabe was busy eliminating his perceived opposition within the ranks and was hard to find.”⁴⁵⁴

Yet, the public narrative from the top-down was unable to completely control the *private* narratives which were known to spread rapidly through the on-the-ground socio-political networks, communities and prison cadres in exile, as evidenced in the Nhari uprisings discussed in Chapter 4. However, these uprisings were short lived and the full weight of revolutionary-sanctioned violent retribution was utilised to quell all insurrections. Speaking to these internal ZANU splinter movements, David Moore contends that:

“Mugabe appeared to be working hard to gain American educations for the ‘Marxist’ soldiers over whom he was trying to gain control. Yet when he returned to the Mozambican front, wherein these youth were training, he and then Mozambican president Samora Machel – not a very old man either – agreed to put the leaders of these youth in Mozambican prisons, where they remained until the 1980 elections for Zimbabwe...The Mugabe regime was only starting at this moment (some might say in hindsight that this was the beginning of the end), but it seems it has remained true to its origins today.”⁴⁵⁵

In relation to the Nhari rebellion in the ZANU military camps in Zambia, the following texts summarise its violent and subjugated closure as such:

“By all accounts, the party executed Nhari and Mataure and several others at once. Hove, Mutambanengwe, Sanyanga, Mukono, and Madekurozwa were sentenced ‘to death in their absence’. Sanyanga and Dziruni went into hiding in Lusaka; others sought police protection...What is known is that many ZANU officials who had left Zambia, like Mukono and Mutambanengwe, did not return...”⁴⁵⁶

⁴⁵⁴ Moore, D. 2009. *Mamdani’s Enthusiasms*. Retrieved from the web 10/04/09. <http://concernedafricascholars.org/mamdani-enthusiasms/>, 6.

⁴⁵⁵ Moore, D. 2009. *Zimbabwe 1997-2007: A democracy of diminished expectations*. Retrieved from the web 10/04/09. <http://www.africafiles.org/printableversion.asp?id=17002>: 3. See also Moore, D. 1995. “Democracy, Violence and Identity in the Zimbabwean War of National Liberation: Reflections from the Realms of Dissent”. *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 29 (3): 375-402.

⁴⁵⁶ White, L. 2003. *The Assassination of Herbert Chitepo – Texts and Politics in Zimbabwe*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 40.

“A few people were arrested and some were killed actually, some were killed. So I think there’s always a problem, I think there has always ‘been’ a problem with liberation movements, especially those which participated in a bloody war, you know, because for them, *the ‘process of elimination’ was to them solving a situation*. So they carried over even when they’re in government that ‘okay, we don’t want to have too many voices so we’ll silence these ones.’”⁴⁵⁷

Thus, it is clear that these internal ‘treacheries’ which frequently erupted into violence were carefully contained within the structures of military disciplinary procedures (‘tidy’ systems); although highly punitive in nature they had an ordering (albeit forceful) effect nonetheless.

5.2.2. The Untidiness of Negotiation Texts

In the prelude to independence however, another text was introduced through the Lancaster House agreement and in many ways, enforced on all the parties involved in the struggle for Zimbabwe’s freedom. The tweaked revision of the left-over Rhodesian Constitution combined with a hastily-convened British-American initiated peace talks, resulted in a jagged and at times irrelevant set of scripts aimed at bringing an end to a protracted and bloody liberation war. The Lancaster House talks embodied an inherently scattered narrative with divergent and contradicting interests that were imposed on the negotiated settlement.

“On the contrary, major compromises had been forced upon us at Lancaster House. Just to mention two of its particularly controversial features, this agreement provided for entrenched parliamentary seats for whites, and for so-called ‘willing buyer/willing seller’ policy clearly intended to block or at least obstruct the redistribution of land.”⁴⁵⁸

The call to peace negotiations was met with varying degrees of ambiguity. A clear sentiment among the more militant elements of ZANU and ZAPU was the conviction that independence should be gained through a military victory. Robert Mugabe in particular expressed strong resistance to the peace talks. However, he eventually succumbed.

“Robert Mugabe, who opposed both the unity agreement and the ceasefire, was instrumental in surreptitiously organizing new [military] recruits. He was hostile to the

⁴⁵⁷ Interview: DL1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 11/08/06 - (Ndebele Journalist employed as a business editor for a prominent newspaper).

⁴⁵⁸ Nyathi, A. and Hoffman, J. 1990. *Tomorrow is Built Today*. Harare: Anvil Press, 48.

whole idea of détente and bitterly critical of Kaunda's role; the solution in Rhodesia, he believed, lay only in a violent struggle."⁴⁵⁹ Even with the hesitant cooperation of Mugabe, there remained a fractious agenda to discuss. Martin and Johnson's description of the fray of issues follows:

“ The Lancaster House conference was a tortuous cliff-hanger, a fitting finale to the Rhodesia saga... The Patriotic Front fought against constitutional provisions they regarded as racist (such as reserved seats for twenty whites), against restrictions on constitutional changes, the retention of the Rhodesian forces, the restriction placed on the ability of a new government to redistribute land that had been taken from the Africans over the previous ninety years, the length of time given for a ceasefire, and many other issues.⁴⁶⁰

Although agreement was finally reached, most scholars and stakeholders involved in the Lancaster House talks would agree that it was a procedure riddled with compromise on many fronts.

The remnants of the former Rhodesian constitution that were carried over into the independence dispensation had at least two significant consequences. First, during the Gukurahundi violence of the early 1980s, many pieces of the oppressive legislation enacted to repress the black liberation movements during the time of white Rhodesian rule were still enshrined as law and were quickly revitalised and forcibly justified against the ZAPU opposition and the civilian populations of Matabeleland. Second, this revamped Rhodesian constitution has been frequently cited as the reason or excuse why the ZANU-PF continually amends the constitution. However, most of the constitutional addendums since independence have served to entrench the ruling party's power. The efforts at constitutional reform have been a dismal failure which has fuelled the current opposition and civil society demands for a constitutional re-write with broad-based public participation.⁴⁶¹

Within the gamut of discourse and social construction, a constitution represents a kind of meta-narrative that serves as a collective reference point for guiding the governance of a nation. A constitution functions as a reinforcement of the collective

⁴⁵⁹ Meredith, M. 1979. *The Past is Another Country – Rhodesia 1890-1979*. London: Andre Deutsch, 169.

⁴⁶⁰ Martin, D. & Johnson, P. 1981: 315.

⁴⁶¹ The ZANU-PF regime has altered the national Constitution 19 times in 29 years since independence. This amount of constitutional adjustments is quite high when compared to other 'democratic' governments around the world.

polity, as the backbone to the social contracts that are corporately negotiated in order to ensure peaceful co-existence as one nation or people group. To this end, the following interview respondent poignantly argued:

“...the old ANC [African National Congress] used to say ‘the trouble with Zimbabwe is that it didn’t have the Freedom Charter’. *The Freedom Charter tied human rights to sovereignty*. In Zimbabwe the two are separated, so ZANU stands for sovereignty and the MDC [opposition] stands for human rights, and what they need is a Freedom Charter...I mean the Nationalist movement of which I was a member in the late 1950s and early 1960s didn’t do anything like the Freedom Charter, but its rhetoric was certainly for democracy and human rights, it saw itself as an emancipatory movement. And I can remember George Silundika, week after week of those astonishing mass rallies; it went on forever so they had plenty of time to talk about those things. Well Silundika used to give a continuous lecture on democracy to his audience, starting with Athens and working his way through.”⁴⁶²

The key argument in this transcription is that the original utterances (in this case a Freedom Charter) of a nation’s political narrative beginnings form the basis of all subsequent construction of its collective values and socio-political governance structures. *Therefore, not only did independent Zimbabwe inherit a faulty constitution (a relic of the Rhodesian colonial powers), it failed to ratify a corporate consensus on the foundations of its understandings of nationalism that would serve as a kind of directional compass, a legitimate reference for its future as a nation-state.*

5.2.3. The Multiplicity of Independence Narratives

After independence in April of 1980, the democratic momentum of that transitional moment released a plethora of narratives that ZANU could not contain. First, there was an exuberant international narrative of ‘*African black liberation from white minority rule*’ heralded by the most unlikely bedfellows - both the communist and democratic global communities (albeit for different ideological reasons). So enamoured was the world by the newly independent status of Zimbabwe that it was unable to accept any evidence of trouble within the country’s borders.

“Sadly also there was a lot of deliberate silence or looking the other way by the West because *the West was virtually desperate that Zimbabwe should be a*

⁴⁶² Interview: TR1, Oxford, UK – 21/10/08 – (White British professor, researcher and widely published author who is a leading authority on the history of Zimbabwe).

success story. And they were really hopeful that Robert Mugabe was, you know, a W.O.G...a Western oriented gentleman.”⁴⁶³

“But the Britain Zimbabwean Society was caught in the same dilemma as the other groups like the Catholic International Relations were caught in. We existed to say, ‘*Hooray, here’s a brand new Zimbabwe*’. You didn’t want to have to say, ‘Oh my God, it’s not.’”⁴⁶⁴

Second, initially the ZANU-PF embraced a platform of *reconciliation*, offering a narrative of peace and seeming willingness to dialogue with the various external and internal antagonists involved in the independence struggle. In his inauguration address, Mugabe extended a hand of collaboration to his former ‘enemies’, calling the nation to adjust and:

“...relate to each other as brothers bound one to another by a bond of national comradeship...We are being born again not as individuals, but collectively as a people, nay, as a viable nation of Zimbabweans. If yesterday I fought you as an enemy, today you have become a friend and an ally with the same national interest, loyalty, rights and duties as myself. If yesterday you hated me, today you cannot avoid the love that binds me to you and you to me.”⁴⁶⁵

Enraptured by the euphoria of the inauguration, the masses who gathered at Rufaro Stadium in Harare on the 17th of April 1980 most likely only heard what sounded like benevolent overtures from their new Prime Minister. However, with the hindsight of the Matabeleland massacres, it would seem that this pontificating about reconciliation was a form of political-correctness; a disguised nationalist discourse demanding conformity and driven by the dynamics of ‘*ethnocentrism, group-think and rank disequilibrium*’⁴⁶⁶.

Third, above and beyond the international and national rhetoric, a myriad of provincial and local alternative social formations (political, church and civil society) emerged after the all-inclusive elections and rapidly filled the available democratic space with their particular narrative interests. “The government that came to power in Zimbabwe at independence in 1980 inherited a state apparatus that was relatively

⁴⁶³ Interview: JM1, Johannesburg, South Africa - 26/02/08 – (Shona Professor of Political Science in Zimbabwe).

⁴⁶⁴ Interview: TR1, Oxford, UK – 21/10/08 – (White British professor, researcher and widely published author who is a leading authority on the history of Zimbabwe).

⁴⁶⁵ Motjuwadi, S. 1980. “Uhuru as Mugabe takes Power”, in Couzens, T. (ed.) *Zimbabwe: The Search for Common Ground Since 1890 – From the pages of DRUM magazine*, Harare: NatPrint: 309.

⁴⁶⁶ Mandel, R. 1979. *Perception, Decision-making and Conflict*. Washington DC: University Press of America, Inc., 15-48.

developed in African terms and, in turn, confronted an array of coherent interest groups capable of putting the country's new leaders under varying kinds of conflicting pressures."⁴⁶⁷ Whether in the realms of media, health, or victims of demobilisation violence, finding one's democratic voice seemed to be the order of the day:

"The Bulawayo Chronicle wasn't responsible to any political party. *It had not yet been taken over by the State; it felt free to interview who and whoever you like.* So it was still a real newspaper. It still had journalism anyway. And reading the Chronicle in 1980-1981, you had interviews of the ZIPRA women who were brought back into the assembly point, you had reports of the dissidents in Manicaland and remarkable broad coverage."⁴⁶⁸

"My research was in the east, in Makoni and as I told you before, there were rumours of events in Matabeleland about prior Entumbane [demobilisation camp] insurgents and dislodged Manica people were going back home, fleeing Bulawayo because they had been made victims of these stories. *They had been made victims of the Ndebele.* They'd been asked to say this word which you have all the clicks possible and if you were Shangaan you can't possibly say... So in Manicaland, in Makoni, you have the extraordinary situation where old ladies who'd never been in Matabeleland, who'd never seen an Ndebele, calling for vengeance on them and so on."⁴⁶⁹

"And you had this dramatic record of the meeting in Kupane [in 1983] where Mugabe has come to have reports on development. And all the people there are bringing up...'seventy schools were built'. This is right in the middle of the Gukurahundi and nobody says anything at all about the security situation until the German doctor...at St Luke's Hospital, she was there. And they ask her whether she has anything to say about the medical situation. And she says '*my hospital is full of terribly wounded and dying people who have been beaten up by the Fifth Gang*'. They're absolutely shocked because she is saying this to Mugabe."⁴⁷⁰

In the above recollections, it appears evident that early on in Zimbabwe's independence, a wave of transitional freedom swept across the nation and its citizens. The protagonists of democracy felt empowered to pursue a course of uncensored speech and freedom of association, ideals that most black Zimbabweans felt they deserved and had fought hard for. For the ZANU-PF, the cacophony of this democratic palaver of contrasting ideas and

⁴⁶⁷ Gerhert, G. 1991. Book review of Herbst, J. 1990. *State Politics in Zimbabwe*. Harare: University of Zimbabwe Press. Retrieved from the web 09/04/09. <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/47127/gail-m-gerhert/state-politics-in-zimbabwe>.

⁴⁶⁸ Interview: TR1, Oxford, UK – 21/10/08 – (White British professor, researcher and widely published author who is a leading authority on the history of Zimbabwe).

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid.

colliding values seemed to threaten their newly acquired power and represented more ambiguity than they were willing to absorb. “The play of conflicting interests in a framework of shared purposes is the drama of a free society. It is a robust exercise and a noisy one, not for the fainthearted or the tidy-minded.”⁴⁷¹

Amidst this democratic disorder, ZANU-PF needed an ordering or controlling script. The disgruntled, fledgling groups of ex-ZIPRA and other third force ‘dissidents’⁴⁷² in the regions of Matabeleland and Midlands represented a counter-narrative which provided just the sustaining plot ZANU-PF needed to re-write its own nationalist meta-drama from. *ZANU-PF as a political organization, riding on its Liberation credentials and its sweeping Election victory in April 1980, took the risk of singularly attempting to define and dictate the nationalist agenda which resulted in a crisis of grave proportions.*

5.3. Ideological Nationalism: Manufacturing a Regulatory Memory

In this study ‘*ideological nationalism*’ is understood as a set of socio-political logics that are superimposed on a group of people who possess various natural and created historical affiliations. It is characterised by a particular grid-system of beliefs or mind-sets of group-thinking that are meant to explain the corporate life and the reality of socio-political relations. Outside of the specific norms prescribed by an ideological nationalism, those populations who have been drafted to exist under ideological nationalisms have little room for diverse ways of being or doing. Ideological nationalism relies on its ability to carefully craft, if not outright control social memory. Pamela Machakanja expounds on this notion further:

“From a socio-cultural perspective, social memory is conceptualised as a tool for social control and domination. While such control may be contested, it is typically managed by powerful groups to serve their own purposes as an imposed consensus. From this perspective, the core proposition put forward is the creation of hegemony through domination of cultural and political meanings of selected past events in the interest of a few.”⁴⁷³

⁴⁷¹ Gardner, J. 1991. *The Art of Fiction: Notes on Craft for Young Writers*. Vancouver: Vintage Books, 15.

⁴⁷² ‘Breaking the Silence’, 1997: 35. The ‘dissidents’ label was extended to include not only disillusioned ex-ZIPRA fighters, but also South African supported renegades called ‘Super-Zapu’, ex-refugees and ZAPU youth, those motivated by revenge, organized gangs and other criminal elements who were taking advantage of the confusion.

⁴⁷³ Machakanja, P. 2008. “Politics of Memory: Collective Remembering and Manipulation of the Past in Zimbabwe”. *Africa Peace and Conflict Journal*, 1 (1): 47.

“Scholars have observed that the writing of history [social memory] has often been used to ‘legitimate’ the nation-state, both in an attempt to ‘naturalise’ it as the central principle of political organisation, and to make it the ‘subject and object of historical development.”⁴⁷⁴

In conceptual contrast to ideological nationalism, there exists what one might call ‘*values-based nationalism*’ which is characterised by a more organic, people-centred nationalism that is based on sets of shared social contracts that have been rehearsed, contested and negotiated by a group of people who possess various natural and created historical affiliations. Mugabe’s government chose to construct a nation-state based on an imposed ideological frame of reference, and as such forfeited the longitudinal strength of a nationalism that is born out of a people-driven consensus on common agreed upon values of co-existence. The ZANU-PF nationalist project was precariously balanced on three foundational pillars of political machinations: *National Sovereignty, One-party Statism and Leader Veneration*.

5.3.1. The Sovereign Nation-State: ‘The Emperor has no Clothing’

The ZANU-PF nationalist meta-narrative was shaped around the rhetoric of a unified, *sovereign nation-state* with a powerful central government and ‘socialised’ structures that were assumed to provide protection and boundary to a set of peoples connected by a shared political ideology, controlling legal system and distinct set of geographical borders. ZANU-PF’s nationalist agenda was rapidly subsumed by the inherited structural relics of the Colonialist rule that it carefully *imitated* and, like so many other independence governments in Africa, the revolutionary transformation seemed to stop short of genuine, durable transformation at a national level. This notion of post-colonial mimicry is piercingly articulated in the powerful writing of Franz Fanon:

“The programme [colonial mimicry] consists not only of climbing out of the morass but also of catching up with the other nations using the only means at hand. They reason that if the European nations have reached that stage of development, it is on account of their efforts: ‘Let us therefore’, they seem to say, ‘prove to ourselves and to the whole world that we are capable of the same achievements.’ This manner of setting out the problem of the evolution of under-developed countries seems to us to be neither correct nor reasonable.”⁴⁷⁵

⁴⁷⁴ Raftopoulos, B. 2004. “Nation, Race and History in Zimbabwean Politics”. A paper presented at the University of Edinburgh’s Centre of African Studies International Conference on *States, Borders and Nations: Negotiating Citizenship in Africa*. May 2004.

⁴⁷⁵ Fanon, F. 1963. *The Wretched of the Earth*. London: Penguin Books, 75.

Literary critique and cultural theorist, Homi Bhabha gives descriptive parlance to post-colonial mimicry as such:

“...mimicry emerges as one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge...then colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*. Which is to say, that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an *ambivalence*: in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference...mimicry emerges as the representation of a difference that it itself a process of disavowal. Mimicry is, thus the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which ‘appropriates’ the Other as it visualises power. Mimicry is also the sign of the inappropriate, however, a difference or recalcitrance which coheres the dominant strategic function of colonial power, intensifies surveillance, and poses an immanent threat to both ‘normalized’ knowledges and disciplinary powers.”⁴⁷⁶

In independent Zimbabwe, the ZANU-PF systematically applied post-colonial mimicry not only in its use of brutal force but also in its inability to incorporate difference into its meta-narrative of nationalism. In so doing, ZANU-PF reinvented and internalised the same ethic of fixed intolerance that was so pervasive in the Rhodesian colonial rule. Thus, in the Matabeleland violence, ZANU-PF acted out the very bigotry it had proclaimed to hate as characterised in the oppressive Rhodesian regime of Ian Smith. The following interview transcript argues that ZANU-PF’s post-colonial mimicry (an insatiable appetite to appropriate all control of power) was not based on it being a weak state, but instead it is about it being an irresponsible state:

“We can’t talk, we can’t do anything. It [the state] monopolises radio, it monopolises heroes, it monopolises mountains; everything. As long as it is able to do that, then it is still strong, it is not weak. The crisis to me is that it is an *irresponsible* state which is too strong. It is irresponsible in that it is no longer serving anybody. Generally, you can’t penetrate it [the state].”⁴⁷⁷

Stated another way, the Gukurahundi violence was not the response of a fragile or vulnerable state under attack, as the ZANU-PF attempted to make the masses believe. Rather, it was the reaction of an insecure, egotistical state that insisted on fortifying itself by eliminating all potential and actual threats to its ‘sovereignty’ in order to solidify its pervasive control of power over the nation.

⁴⁷⁶ Bhabha, H. 1994. *The Location of Culture*. London and New York: Routledge, 85-86.

⁴⁷⁷ Interview: SG1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 20/12/07 - (Ndebele Professor of Political Science, researcher and author).

What the ZANU-PF could not have predicted was that their independence would arrive on the tail-end of a climax in the glorious era of the ‘nation-state’ experiment globally. Within a decade the world would witness the demise of the Soviet Union (a prime example of ideological nationalism), setting in motion an era marked by serious questions about the coherency and functionality of the nation-state as a political organizing system especially in the wake of the exponential multiplication of demands for succession by minority groups across the globe. Writing on the crumbling of the nation-state façade, Eric Hobsbawm suggests that: “Nation-states and nations will be seen as retreating before, resisting, adapting to, being absorbed or dislocated by, the new supra-national restructuring of the globe”⁴⁷⁸. In multiple ways, the continuous public discourse of the ZANU-PF government leadership regarding its sacred national ‘sovereignty’ wanes in its clinging attempt to hold a nation together that is tearing apart at the seams. Commenting on Zimbabwe’s sovereignty obsession from the present looking back, David Moore speaks with wit and precision:

“If patriotism is the last refuge of scoundrels, sovereignty may be the last fig-leaf of emperors of ‘quasi-states’ with very few remaining clothes. Mugabe uses the rhetoric of sovereignty unrelentingly. It seems to have some resonance with his peers in equally nearly naked states, although it is hard to judge whether the people of these states are as patriotic as their leaders would like. There is no doubt, though, that such rhetoric is full of hypocrisy and serves mostly to justify tarring opposition with the brush of ‘imperialist puppets’ and to make every effort to stop foreign funding of human rights and democracy promotion.”⁴⁷⁹

In the extreme, one interviewee depicted the ZANU-PF nationalist-sovereignty agenda as being a ‘smoke-screen’ for the on-going perpetration of severe human rights abuses:

“Nationalism means kill your own people without being discovered; without being accountable to the world community. So, our nationalism and our sovereignty is about killing, raping, without being accountable to the world at large. So, that’s our nationalism, so that’s our sovereignty...So, basically my understanding of nationalism in terms of Mugabe’s lexicon is ‘*kill your own people without being accountable*’”⁴⁸⁰.

⁴⁷⁸ Hobsbawm, E. 1990. *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 182.

⁴⁷⁹ Moore, D. 2009. *Zimbabwe 1997-2007: A democracy of diminished expectations*. Retrieved from the web 10/04/09. <http://www.africafiles.org/printableversion.asp?id=17002>: 7.

⁴⁸⁰ Interview: GS1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 17/08/06 – (Shona Human Rights Lawyer and survivor of severe torture as a political prisoner under the ZANU-PF government).

Whether planned or not, the ‘dissident’ oppositional voice that reverberated from within Matabeleland acted as a forerunner to the many secessionist movements that spread like wild fire in many parts of the world after 1990. During the 1980s, ZAPU-ZIPRA occupied the stage of minority protest (both as the formal opposition represented in parliament and the informal opposition in the form of regional resistance to the Gukurahundi violence), thereby, creating an ethno-political counter-narrative; a ‘revolution within a revolution’. This persistent defiance had two major effects on the ZANU-PF nationalist project. It resulted in what Delanty and O’Mahony term the ‘*decoupling of nation and state*’ and the ‘*decoupling of citizenship and nationality*’.⁴⁸¹ The ‘*decoupling of nation and state*’ refers to the ethno-cultural sense of identification as a nation (a people group) verses the actual programmatic services, systems and instrumentalities of the state structures. When the state apparatus no longer delivers a valuable or tangible service to the people it purports to serve, it delinks itself by default from the expected loyalty it demands. This rift between the state and the nation of citizens it claims to be serving began to occur in Matabeleland within the first two years of independence as the ZANU-PF determinedly instituted repressive measures against the region and ultimately this disconnect was sealed with the unleashing of the Fifth Brigade violence in 1982. This clearly defined separation between the subjects and the state that is supposed to govern them, surfaces in the following interview transcripts:

“I think ...*this* president was not sure how he was going to make the *Matabele*’s obey him. I think that is why he did that, so that to make a fear...so that these people fear so that they can follow him, and he achieved that ...”⁴⁸²

“In fact, my father...my parents were...they never value ZANU-PF members. So I had that hatred of ZANU-PF, so I was like waiting for *anything* which might come ‘opposing’ ZANU-PF in an effective way. So, I am ready to join *anything* that’s serious about opposing ZANU-PF. So, it s not a matter of ‘my’ parents only but the ‘whole’ area where I stay, many people don’t want to hear *anything* about ZANU-PF. Because they [did] a lot of bad things; bad things which ZANU-PF did, in the 80s, early 80s.”⁴⁸³

⁴⁸¹ Delanty, G. and O’Mahony, P. 2002. *Nationalism and Social Theory*. London: Sage Publishers, 169-175.

⁴⁸² Interview: MS2, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 11/09/07 - (Ndebele male, rural farmer from Tsholotsho, Matabeleland and primary survivor of Gukurahundi violence).

⁴⁸³ Interview: RM1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 14/09/06 – (Ndebele former security officer for opposition party and survivor of severe torture as a political prisoner under the ZANU-PF government).

It would be important to note the language employed in the first transcript paragraph in which the interviewee refers to “*this*” not ‘*our*’ president inferring a distancing or a refusal to acknowledge the person who holds the title or function of state president in one’s own nation. This is a matter of ownership; in essence the speaker is saying ‘Mugabe may be ‘*the*’ president, but he is not ‘*my*’ president. Also, in this transcription the speaker refers to the ‘Matabele’ in juxtaposition to the ruling ZANU-PF government. This reference exemplifies a form of ethno-political identity confusion in that the line between the ethnic differentiation of ‘Matabele’ and the oppositional political party ‘ZAPU’ is blurred; insinuating that they are one in the same. However, more importantly it illustrates the ‘decoupling’ of the *national* affiliation (the nation of Matabele) and the *state* (the ZANU-PF political regime). In the second paragraph, the speaker fails to describe the kind of opposition to ZANU-PF that he desires in any substantive way (except to offer the descriptive words of ‘effective’ and ‘serious’). What is more prominent is the emphasis on the word ‘*anything*’ (which is repeated three times) to describe the kind of opposition worthy of joining. For this speaker the needs to differentiate self, family and community from any association with the ZANU-PF state were in the extreme.

The ‘*decoupling of citizenship and nationality*’ refers to the ‘global citizen’ phenomena where transnational affiliations and allegiances can and do supersede the national and geographical boundary constrictions of the past, verses the idea of citizenry as defined and contained within the parameters of certain prescribed duties or obligations performed in the service of the single nation to which one belongs. This global citizenry is made possible through new technologies of digital communication and access to transport that allow these affiliates to instantaneously communicate to large numbers of people anywhere around the world at any time. It is a citizenry of cyber-choice that coalesce around common issues and interests and who often use their technical suave in advocating for global social change.⁴⁸⁴ Unable to fathom a world of global citizenry, ZANU-PF clung relentlessly to the formations of past nationalisms where citizenship was

⁴⁸⁴ Rheingold, H. 2002. *Smart Mobs: the Next Social Revolution – Transforming Cultures and Communities in an Age of Instant Access*. Cambridge, MA: Perseus Books Group.

restricted in *locality*, in thought, belonging and focus of activity. This was a nationalism which demanded that ‘good’ citizenry serve its government and its ideologies instead of demanding that ‘good’ governance serves its citizenry. In practical terms, this form of self-serving nationalism empowered the ZANU-PF government to bestow and revoke citizenship on its people at whim. The following interviews highlight certain concerns whereby citizenship in Zimbabwe has been questioned on the basis of race, ideology or affiliation outside the state’s prescription whether that be on issues of land redistribution, economics or western ideational leanings:

“And what justification are you using? And are [you] not actually rethinking the issue of citizenship? Are you not...saying that who is the authentic subject, what would be the criteria for admission into citizenship? We say the admission depends on being ‘*a son and a daughter of the soil*’...And secondly they [ZANU-PF] are saying ‘no, in terms of economy; it must be owned by the ‘*sons and daughters of the land*’. And that to me is actually something which already played inside the nationalist thought. It was there inside the nationalist thinking from the beginning.”⁴⁸⁵

“My feeling about all of this is it’s a really pathetic and sad cause that if you look at the common thread; the common thread was, to butcher many women and children, and their husbands and brothers who tried to defend their lives, in the pretext of protecting the masses of Zimbabwe and the Zimbabwean people, that was the cause. Today, the butchering of White farmers and their labourers, and the killing of the MDC [opposition] is done again in the *cause* of defending the people of Zimbabwe. But nobody stops to think ‘Wait, hang on’. MDC people were also Zimbabweans, the White farmers were also Zimbabweans – they just happen to be Zimbabweans with a different opinion. But, you see in the whole social order of Zimbabwe, having a different opinion is as good as not being part of the masses. So butchering you is fine... So you become less than human for having a different ideology or a different principle to me. The *worst* thing in Zimbabwe, worse than even murder is to be a puppet of the West. If you are a puppet of the West you deserve to die. If you’re sitting there with views that support what Mugabe calls the ‘Western Hegemony’, you deserve to die.”⁴⁸⁶

Whether one is analysing the Matabeleland violence of the 1980s or the more recent violence of the last decade in Zimbabwe as cited above, the national ‘*decoupling*’ being discussed in this section rests continually on the notion of location; where the citizenry of the nation are being partitioned into the categories of the ‘included’ and the

⁴⁸⁵ Interview: SG1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 20/12/07 - (Ndebele Professor of Political Science, researcher and author).

⁴⁸⁶ Interview: TM1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 01/11/07 – (Shona Businessman whose relative was a prominent leader in the ZANU-PF government).

‘excluded’, both *literally* in their right to be attached to the legal, geographical boundaries and production of the land, and *figuratively* in their sense of identification and belonging to a certain people with common ancestry, roots and values.

“In this narrative of liberation, a common African history and Pan African solidarity, the land has played a determining role as the key marker of a common struggle. It has formed the centrepiece of the ruling party’s construction of belonging, exclusion and history. The official discourse on the liberation struggle has been marked by the translation of a multi-faceted anti-colonial struggle into a singular discourse designed to legitimate the authoritarian nationalism that has emerged around the land question...”⁴⁸⁷

Thus, while the ZANU-PF pushed ahead with its unyielding pursuit to build a monolithic nation-state in the 1980s, all around them a wave of nation-state disintegration was occurring at the global and continental level and the fractious voices of dissent within their very own borders were gaining volume, accent and momentum at a local and national level. *Unbeknownst to the ZANU-PF the emperor, represented by the machinations of nation-state hegemony, was slowly being exposed; without the clothing of a legitimate, voluntarily-bounded, and reflexive nation-state agenda to cover its nakedness.*

5.3.2. A One-Party State: A Conversation with Self

This study argues that ZANU-PF had its sights on establishing a *one-party state* from the time of Robert Mugabe’s rise to leadership in exile during the 1970s if not from its original existence as a party, although this is a much less quantifiable premise. This research highlights visible patterns that serve as pointers along the pathway of ZANU-PF becoming a one-party state sourced from the political ideological *articulation* as well as the *behaviour* of the ZANU-PF in refusing to reconcile or unify with ZAPU-ZIPRA throughout the liberation struggle despite numerous attempts by frontline states to facilitate this process⁴⁸⁸, refusing to jointly go to the polls with ZAPU in 1980, and then systematic eradicating all opposition parties and voices of dissent in the 1980s. As the ZANU-PF determined to march toward the distant horizon of a one-party state, the socio-

⁴⁸⁷ Raftopoulos, B. 2004. “Nation, Race and History in Zimbabwean Politics”. A paper presented at the University of Edinburgh’s Centre of African Studies International Conference on *States, Borders and Nations: Negotiating Citizenship in Africa*. May 2004.

⁴⁸⁸ See Chapter 4 – Section 4.4. Ethnicity: Liberation Struggle Years – ‘Sons of the Soil’ or ‘Sons of Segregation’

political narratives that were once actively engaged in the production of the vision of the new nation of Zimbabwe became faint and eventually fell away until ZANU-PF was left alone having a *conversation with self*.

In its first two decades of independence, the ZANU-PF maintained an uneasy alliance between its autocratic and democratic pulsations. However in time, this flirtatious posturing faded away and the more dominating, dictatorial tendencies took root.

“We have heard Left rhetoric from Mugabe most vociferously when forceful popular challenges arise...Mugabe’s radical rhetoric included regular accusations of ‘counter-revolution’ and even a late 1998 promise to resurrect ‘socialism’, repeated vociferously in October 2001. The oratory may have amused – but at this stage, no longer confused – the urban masses whom it was meant to intimidate.”⁴⁸⁹

The official government call for a one-party state, although often discussed was only opened to a popular debate in the latter 1980s (after the signing of the Unity Accord) and was followed by an intensive public dialogue around its merits and demerits in 1991⁴⁹⁰. However, this one-party verses multi-party state spectacle appeared to represent yet another one of ZANU-PF’s democratic charades more than a forum of genuine popular, participatory dialogue in the public domain. Traces of one-party statism linger throughout the recorded pre-independence narrative of the ZANU political formations. Only in hindsight did it become evident that the ZANU pre-independence revolutionary rhetoric of one-party statism was to become the *foundation* of the ZANU-PF post-independence governance principles and policies. Broadcasting on the radio from Mozambique in 1976, Mugabe’s infamous words have echoed through time:

“Our votes must go together with our guns. After all, any vote we shall have, shall have been the product of the gun. The gun which produces the vote should remain its security officer – its guarantor. The people’s votes and the people’s guns are always inseparable twins.”⁴⁹¹

⁴⁸⁹ Bond, P. & Manyanya, M. 2002. *Zimbabwe’s Plunge – Exhausted Nationalism, Neoliberalism and the Search for Social Justice*. Pietermaritzburg, South Africa: University of Natal Press, xiii-xv.

⁴⁹⁰ Mandaza, I & Sachikonye, L. (Eds.) (1991). *The One Party State and Democracy – The Zimbabwe Debate*. Southern Africa: Sapes Books.

⁴⁹¹ Meredith, M. 2008. *Robert Mugabe: Power, Plunder, and the Struggle for Zimbabwe*. Johannesburg & Cape Town: Jonathan Ball Publishers: (Front-flap).

In almost direct contrast to Mugabe's declaration of the symbiotic relationship between votes and guns, ZAPU's leader Joshua Nkomo publicly pronounced his diplomatic intentions as follows: "We can either get there by negotiation or by the gun. If it is through negotiation, then everyone will have a say. By the gun – well, dead people are unable to make up their minds."⁴⁹²

This only served to accentuate the divide between ZANU and ZAPU, reinforcing Mugabe's contention that Nkomo and ZAPU were 'sell-outs' who had betrayed the nationalist cause by continuing to compromise with the 'enemy' (the white Rhodesian regime). In turn, ZAPU pointed the accusing finger at ZANU as a divisive, competitive party with violent, power-mongering tendencies.

At the celebration of Chinhoyi (Sinoia) Day, April 30, 1978 Robert Mugabe exhorted his ZANU followers as such: "Let us also derive inspiration and courage, loyalty and commitment from the Battle of Sinoia and its seven heroes and continue to adhere to the Party lines as the only correct line for all of us."⁴⁹³ Again, along a similar vein at the ceremony of Chitepo Day, March 18, 1979, Mugabe exerted the role of ZANU-PF as follows:

"These events [détente] put us off balance. We thus needed to reorganise and readjust ourselves so our party could once more reassert itself as the only revolutionary movement in the country... We just had to wriggle out of the clutches of the ANC and its complete lack of revolutionary concern and re-establish the Party as the overall planner and director of the national struggle."⁴⁹⁴

Political difference was never acceptable to the ZANU pre- or post-independence:

"So, the idea of violence [in ZANU-PF's dealings with opposition] has always been there, it's not new, it's not; there has been *continuity*. We don't know what happened before '77 but, if you read Tekere's book you will see there was this rebellion against Mugabe, you shouldn't imagine that he was easily accepted, he wasn't. Then how do you deal with those dissidents within ZANU? So, you see violence. There were people who were sentenced to death, they were going to be hanged here after independence; apparently they were not. You see Nyati, the fellow who led the forces to Nyadzonia; they killed him after independence."⁴⁹⁵

⁴⁹² Meredith, M. 1979. *The Past is Another Country – Rhodesia 1890-1979*. London: Andre Deutsch, 205.

⁴⁹³ Mugabe, R. 1983. *Our War of Liberation – Speeches, Articles, Interviews 1976-1979*. Harare: Mambo Press, 131.

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid: 140.

⁴⁹⁵ Interview: PN1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 30/03/07 – (Ndebele historian, author, researcher and archivist). Morrison Nyati was a sectional security officer for ZANU who deserted and led the Rhodesian Selous Scouts to Nyadzonia, a refugee camp in Mozambique.

In the after-glow of independence and what seemed to be the dawning of democracy, the 'one-party' sloganeering subsided for a season until the challenging voices of ZAPU as an oppositional political party emerged and the clamouring incidences of 'dissident' violence came to the fore in 1981-1982.

"Yes. I think, having immediately come from an armed conflict in terms of which both the ZIPRA and the ZANLA armies were involved in a single agenda 'to remove the colonial government and establish, you know, majority rule in the country', at *that* particular time it was easy to distinguish the enemy from the then-liberators at that particular time, but then once the enemy that time have been removed, there was then a contestation of space; between ZANLA and ZIPRA. And the ZANLA having had won an election in 1980, it actually sort-of put them in an advantage position, and it was *then* viewed in their own perspective that they should consolidate their position if they were going to survive. Next, the country was going to relapse into a civil war, something that had been noted in some other African countries immediately after independence. So that could have been the motivation of the government to say that... 'we have to quickly establish our self and suppress any form of dissent', and probably that could have been the thinking of the government at that time that could explain the way they reacted and tried to use every single, you know, situation at their disposal to their advantage so that they could establish themselves. The primary motivation then that becomes very clear is that they wanted to 'quash' the ZIPRA, establish themselves in authority, *and it is very clear that the government of the day at that time had very strong intentions of establishing a one-party state. So they were very intolerant of 'any' opposition whatsoever...*"⁴⁹⁶

"...I understand that *Mugabe has always wanted a one-party state he's never been happy with the opposition* of any sort that's why they were having problems that we have at the moment. So the issue of ZAPU being an opposition and being there, he thought he would finish it off, you know, by killing I suppose as many ZAPU officials as he possibly could."⁴⁹⁷

"It was like Nkomo wanted to topple the government. And they [ZANU-PF] were singing and wanting [a] one-party state. And I remember in one video-clip they were saying: '*We want the whole world to know that Zimbabwe wants a one-party state in Zimbabwe...*'"⁴⁹⁸

This discussion necessitates an interrogation into the seedbeds that nurtured this thrust toward one-party statism as a legitimate form of governance in Africa. For one

⁴⁹⁶ Interview: SD1, Johannesburg, South Africa - 18/08/06 – (Shona Human Rights Lawyer).

⁴⁹⁷ Interview: DN3, Johannesburg, South Africa – 30/10/07 – (Ndebele NGO peace worker facilitating trauma healing and reconciliation among rural Matabeleland communities and survivors of Gukurahundi violence).

⁴⁹⁸ Interview: AN1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 12/09/07 – (Ndebele Church leader and Peace activist).

interviewee, the notion of a one-party state is embedded in three root governance systems: in African traditional customs, in the imposed colonial systems, and in the Eastern European and Asian countries that supported the revolutions on the continent.

“You have to understand the dynamics of ‘African succession’; how it happens. If I am king there is no king until I die, that’s how it happens, that’s as simple as all that. And when I die, the next king is my son. So this is the legacy, people shouldn’t imagine that Africa has no legacy of political governance and stuff like that, they have. For a current leader there are probably two or three sources of ideas on governance. One, is the African past itself, because we used to govern ourselves; then you have the colonial period, and it’s the most recent; then, where white Westerners were intransigent, necessitating the taking up of arms, and the arms came from the East. And so these people began to have contact with the East but as you know, the East was one-party dictatorship. So you have three sources and all three sources from a governance viewpoint were disastrous.”⁴⁹⁹

Although the one-party state rule may seem to correspond with the traditional hierarchical chieftom model (respect for age, authority and leadership for life), the inherited colonial expression of nation-state was often stripped of the ancient ‘checks and balances’ of accountability that were part of many well-ordered African societies in the past⁵⁰⁰. Absolute power and the greed that accompanied access to the accumulated wealth of the modern nation-state overwhelmed many of the independence African leaders. Stepping down or letting go of an official function such as Head of State, relinquishing the power, honour, dignity, respect and wealth afforded to these positions was virtually unheard of. In certain ‘face-saving’ traditional African worldviews to be removed from leadership would represent being publically shamed and disrespected in one’s old age, a humiliation barely imaginable for many. Added to this were the exposure to, and the often blind imitation of the colonial rule which by its nature was hierarchical, power-

⁴⁹⁹ Interview: PN1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 30/03/07 – (Ndebele historian, author, researcher and archivist).

⁵⁰⁰ Ayittey, G. 1998. *Africa in Chaos*. New York: St. Martin’s Press. Contrary to certain popular assumptions, the traditional African governance systems did have in-built checks and balances that protected village residents from arbitrary dictatorial rule. Despite chieftaincy rule for life, there were numerous processes of empowerment for the people such as collective mass meetings where all people could have a say in the governance of the village and even openly critique their leaders without repression (legislative function), communal justice processes (judicial function) and the fact that most Chiefs could not make unilateral decisions, they were required to make all decisions in consultation with their sub-headman (elders / councils) and in consideration of the will of the people (executive functions). On top of this, aside from the land itself which was owned by the Chief villagers were allowed to accumulate private wealth, travel and barter in open markets of exchange, and corporately require that the Chiefs share their wealth (economic redistribution functions).

hungry and economically greedy and corrupt. Finally, compounding this all, many of the global sponsors of African liberation struggles were countries entrenched in the ideologies of socialist-communist, one-party state regimes themselves.

“...I think its roots were found in Marxist Leninism, you know. I think that Mugabe in 1980 was committed to that ideology. I think he was committed to, at the very least a *de facto* one party state, and possibly a *de jure* one party state. And Joshua Nkomo and his ZAPU party stood in their path. And they were a lot harder to attack because they had been a guerrilla ... they had their own guerrilla army. And they were the liberators in their own right so they couldn't just be dealt with in the way that they dealt with ... certain officials like Muzorewa had been dealt with. *But I think that the motivation was to create a one party state.*”⁵⁰¹

“I think there's a very Socialist-Communist ideology that belies all of this. And in there the most clear and most important thing is the ideology itself. So you're taught in class and history and school to accept that there is the empowerment of the masses. But the strange paradox no-one ever asked is: How can the masses be empowered by killing the masses, for the cause of empowering the masses? So it's a sort-of self-defeating exercise where no-one ever questions it. So only now when you stand back do you realize 'no, no, no, there's not empowerment of the masses; it's empowering those who 'claim' to represent the masses. And that's why you can butcher the masses because the masses don't really count. The key thing is: masses must realize that the only way forward is to support the leader of the masses. And if you don't realize that then you're not part of the masses and they wanna butcher you. *So theoretically that means that you can actually kill the masses right down to the last person, as long as the leader of the masses stays on top, then the ideology is preserved.*”⁵⁰²

In the unwavering race to ensure that Zimbabwe became a one-party state, the ZANU-PF had to declare all formations that propagated alternative national scripts as a threat or even an 'enemy' to the State including the media, civil society organisations, unions, legal fraternities, religious institutions and as a matter of urgency any political opposition parties. As long as these formations kept pace with the official ZANU-PF meta-narrative they were afforded fairly expanded freedoms. However, once they began to speak in opposition to ZANU-PF governance and official policies they were quickly declared a menace to Zimbabwe.

“The 'issue' of one-party state in Zimbabwe can actually be seen from the actions of the present government, right from the very day that it took over power: from

⁵⁰¹ Interview: DC1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe - 13/09/07 (White Zimbabwean Human Rights Lawyer and politician).

⁵⁰² Interview: TM1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 01/11/07 – (Shona Businessman whose relative was a prominent leader in the ZANU-PF government).

the way it crushed dissent, from the way it nationalized the media, from the way it consolidated its power and trying to stake the majority representation in government, and from the way it tried to push its own agenda, whether or not that was popular or generally acceptable to the country. And even to the extent that where very prominent people in ZANU-PF itself, went out, you know, the likes of Edgar Tekere, to come ‘out of’ the ZANU-PF and try to fight the imaginations of Robert Mugabe to try and emasculate the whole country into a one-party state. And even the tampering and the panel-beating of the Constitution to ‘suit’ these goals of trying to create a one-party state. *So you can actively discern from the actions right from the beginning, that there was this desire, which was frustrated in the way to create a one-party state.*”⁵⁰³

In the end, the ZANU-PF bowed to the will of the people and aborted its efforts to officially declare a one-party state. *However, ZANU-PF did not curb its politically ambitious behaviour and maintained its unswerving march toward securing an indefinite tenure as the ruling party of Zimbabwe, and in so doing the unidirectional conversation with itself continued.*

5.3.3. Leader Veneration

The nationalist agenda of the ZANU-PF encouraged a ceremonial form of ‘*leader worship*’ where its populist figures were revered as demigods. In general, revolutionary leaders are often imagined as untouchable (to be feared and given unquestionable respect), unable to do wrong (and if they do offend the blame is placed on other persons surrounding them), and the conduits for understanding and interpreting the truth for the masses (they become the voice for all the people they lead). Their credentials rest on having fought in the struggle, surviving imprisonment, educational qualifications, intelligence, personality charisma and public speaking abilities. In short, their goal is to establish themselves as the only person fit to rule the nation which in turn evolves into a form of ‘*personality cult*’ often shrouded in mystical intrigue regarding the mortality and supernatural prowess of the individual leader involved. In 1982, Robert Mugabe’s credentials were articulated as follows:

“With selfless determination and single-minded dedication of purpose, the first Prime Minister of the Republic of Zimbabwe has been in the forefront of the struggle for political justice in this country for nearly two decades. Detained and

⁵⁰³ Interview: SD1, Johannesburg, South Africa - 18/08/06 – (Shona Human Rights Lawyer).

imprisoned by successive Rhodesian governments for long periods, he overcame the attempts of the authorities to break him by the sheer force of his commitment to the struggle, and his conviction in the justice of the cause and the inevitability of victory. He led ZANU(PF) through the armed struggle to the overwhelming election victory in February 1980.”⁵⁰⁴

In this paragraph, the discourse of ‘selfless determination’, ‘single-minded dedication’, ‘sheer force of his commitment’ and ‘his conviction in the justice of the cause’ indirectly elevate Mugabe above his cohorts in the struggle, and establish him as the only person deserving to lead Zimbabwe. Seemingly, after independence, Mugabe had to be justified as the only possible leader of the new nation:

“It was during this time [1975] that Robert Mugabe was confirmed as the unchallenged leader of ZANU and the fighting forces...In the historic ZANU Congress at Chimoio in Mozambique in 1977...His ascendancy as head of the political and armed struggle in Zimbabwe was complete.”⁵⁰⁵

Here we find an explicit script ascribing unreserved finality to Mugabe’s accepted leadership through the use of definitive phraseology such as ‘unchallenged’, ‘ascendency’ and ‘complete’. However, in this paragraph the all-encompassing narrative of ZANU-PF nationalism is exposed as it unwittingly (or wittingly) equates the ‘political and armed struggle in Zimbabwe’ with ZANU-PF as a movement thereby, completely overriding the role of ZAPU in the revolution. This text not only closes the door to all oppositional leadership challenges, it consolidates Mugabe’s leadership in the *present* leaving scarce room for any kind of metamorphosis in the national needs for different trajectories of leadership in the *future*.

The combination of ethereal fate, influential oratory skills and the singular loyalty from the liberation soldiers are all given credence to in the narrative depiction of Mugabe’s rise to power.

“His return [from Ghana] to Rhodesia [in 1960] at a moment when the African intellectuals were, for the first time, showing a willingness to become involved in politics, was a perfect example of unconscious timing...Robert Mugabe, as a distinguished visitor, was then asked to speak: he won the support of the crowd by stressing the need to blend together all classes of men in the nationalist movement

⁵⁰⁴ Mitchell, D. 1982. *Makers of History: Who’s who 1981-82 – Nationalist Leaders in Zimbabwe*. Bulawayo: Book Centre, 139.

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid: 141.

and the importance of graduates and professional men accepting the chosen leaders ‘even if they may not be university men.’”⁵⁰⁶

“...and it was widely believed that he [Mugabe] was playing an active part in the recruitment and training of guerrillas for further incursions into Rhodesia. Certainly documents smuggled out of the training camps described him as the only political leader in whom the guerrillas still had trust and through whom they were prepared to communicate with the outside world...Although the validity of Mugabe’s claim to have political control over the bulk of the guerrillas has been queried in certain recent newspaper reports, there is little doubt that his power in this quarter is greater than that of any other top nationalist.”⁵⁰⁷

In the first script above one is stuck by the terminology of ‘unconscious timing’ which insinuates some level of supernatural destiny in Mugabe’s leadership ascent. The author writes of Mugabe’s ‘distinguished’ ability to win ‘the support of the crowd’ as a way of enshrining his populist appeal in the Liberation movement. In the second script Mugabe is glorified as a war strategist, promoted as the only channel through which the freedom fighters would willingly speak to the world and revered as possessing the dominant power above all other leading nationalist figures.

When a leader is afforded this level of public awe combined with appointed or elected power two mutually co-dependent processes occur: the masses develop a disproportionate *fear* of the leader and the leader develops a disproportionate *arrogance*. These two faces of leader veneration are well exemplified in the interaction between Catholic Bishop Karlen of Matabeleland and Prime Minister Robert Mugabe in 1983 when the Fifth brigade violence had heightened significantly:

“The other ones [Matabeleland Church Leaders] said, ‘It is terrible, terrible what is going on. We have to pray and pray’. I told them ‘Why do you have to pray? It is not enough. We have to *act*’. Then I had a proposal: three African bishops from whatever churches – it did not matter – should go to Mr. Mugabe. A delegation from Matabeleland. Not one volunteered. They were too scared.”⁵⁰⁸

“We do not respond to scriptures, but according to given political principles. It is not when the Bishop sneezes that we all catch a cold. No, we are a government and we run our affairs as we see fit and if bishops speak it does not mean that we

⁵⁰⁶ Cary, R. & Mitchell, D. 1977. *African Nationalist Leaders in Rhodesia – Who’s who*. Bulawayo: Books of Rhodesia, 168.

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid: 171-172.

⁵⁰⁸ Yap, K. 2001. *Uprooting the Weeds – Power, Ethnicity and Violence in the Matabeleland Conflict 1980-1987*. Stockholm: Elanders Novum, 230. (An excerpt taken from an interview conducted by the author, K. Yap with Catholic Bishop Karlen, Bulawayo, 18/03/94).

should all stop working because their holiness have spoken...[Bishop Karlen and some of his priests] they are supporters of Nkomo and they are the ones who go to the other bishops and say what is happening, and the other bishops merely listen to them and accept what they say as the word of God, which cannot be denied because it is a man of God who is saying it. But they don't know perhaps that a man of God is worshipping mammon instead of the real God, so the poor bishops are mislead into believing that what Bishop Karlen is saying is the holy truth and nothing else but the holy truth."⁵⁰⁹

Bishop Karlen's remarks highlight the grip of fear on the masses when it came to confronting Mugabe, even in the face of being witnesses to the atrocities happening all around them. Mugabe's condescending response patronised the ordinary citizen and the on-the-ground Church (representing a large network of civil society) by suggesting that they had no say in the governance of the nation and beyond that their convictions were false ('mammon') and linked to the political opposition ('supporters of Nkomo') and that somehow his government (ZANU-PF) was more closely aligned with the 'real God'.

ZANU-PF was not the only nationalist party to revel in acts of leader worship. ZAPU also placed its leader Dr. Joshua Nkomo on a pedestal of grandiose repute, professing life-long loyalty to Nkomo as their leader even in his post-humus state as evidenced in the following transcriptions:

"Like I was saying...you won't separate the people of Matabeleland with Joshua Nkomo because they perceived him as their leader. And up to now, some still feel that Matabeleland should have its own administration, they feel it should be another state. Because they still feel they are not 'free' under Mugabe and the Shonas. They even feel that...there was some times when they proposed that they would rather be part of South Africa rather than the Shonas, because they still feel their group...they'll feel they would be much safer being part of South Africa than part of the ZANU-PF government. And you are rightly saying when you are saying it's part of...this war was like an 'ethnic' war. Because people of Matabeleland, no matter how the ZANLA Forces had operated in some parts of Matabeleland, they still believed '*we are for ZAPU*', and *we can not be separated from Nkomo*, because they knew Nkomo as their *saviour*. The man who had really preached this gospel of freedom."⁵¹⁰

⁵⁰⁹ Yap, K. 2001. *Uprooting the Weeds – Power, Ethnicity and Violence in the Matabeleland Conflict 1980-1987*. Stockholm: Elanders Novum, 230-231. (Mugabe Press Transcription, 1984).

⁵¹⁰ Interview: CM2, Kitwe, Zambia – 09/05/07 - (Ndebele teacher and community development worker with Orphans and Vulnerable Children, former Political Activist and Youth Leader for ZAPU in the early 1980s).

“Yes. I was saying that the people of Matabeleland, *as long as Joshua Nkomo had advised them to take a certain direction, they would follow it*. And I was saying... even up to this moment there are some people from Matabeleland who are now in the leadership positions in ZANU-PF. They will tell you that ‘we are doing this because Nkomo left us here’. But if anything would happen that really would necessitate the breaking, they still identify themselves as ZAPU and not ZANU-PF. And they are saying ‘we are here just because Nkomo left us here’. *They are still saying they are doing this for the sake of Nkomo*, and I still believe some of them still see the injustices that are being done in Matabeleland. And maybe because they are feeling weak they cannot stand against Robert, they say ‘okay, for the sake of peace, we will be here’, but they still identify themselves as ZAPU, as a group of ZIPRA.”⁵¹¹

One interviewee speaking from personal encounter, paints a candid picture of the egotistical volatility, ambiguity and parody that accompanies this kind of leader veneration:

“I can tell you how I view Joshua Nkomo. *He’s a towering figure, but he was emotional, he was valuable, he was vain*. He would say ‘no, no, no’. I learned this, we learned this, he would say ‘no interviews, no, no’. And then [we’d] say ‘oh but Dr Nkomo, you are the one who can speak and you’re the leader ... the father of the nation and da-da-da’ and he would puff up as you were speaking and he would ... then, he would talk. In other words he was very susceptible to flattery. It wasn’t as a strategic decision. So I would say that he probably...was no more of a democrat than Robert Mugabe. *He didn’t like other people to question his authority, he was a dictator too*. If he had been put into full power, I don’t know how much better the country would have been run. However, he was aware that he was representing a minority group, the Ndebele. So he had to make accommodation for the Shona. But when you look at the Shona who were his deputies, they were his *deputies*. *They didn’t like anybody taking the limelight from him*.”⁵¹²

While this leadership rhetoric is not unusual for revolutionary-liberationist ideology, it is necessary to understand that packaged with this kind of leader veneration is an automatic cancellation of the space for multiple leaders who carry different perspectives and/or who could govern the nation through a power-sharing arrangement. Regardless of Nkomo’s faults and weaknesses, there appeared to be a consensual agreement among the interviewees on both sides of the Mashonaland and Matabeleland divide that Nkomo should be commended as a genuine nationalist leader in that he

⁵¹¹ Ibid.

⁵¹² Interview: AM1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 10/08/06 – (White American Journalist who lived in Zimbabwe from 1980 until he was deported by the ZANU-PF government).

appeared to favour diplomacy over force, he was willing to share power across political divides, and he had the whole nation's well-being in mind.

“I think he was a genuine leader, and I think Mugabe... to be honest, *I wouldn't be surprised if it all boiled down to personal jealousy by Mugabe*. But even though Nkomo had a smaller percentage, if he was allowed genuine opposition politics, Mugabe would have to be kept on his toes and I don't think Mugabe liked that. He wanted a one-party State anyway. He kept on talking about a one-party State.”⁵¹³

“I don't think the Zimbabwe Gukurahundi situation is that simple. I don't think so. I think it had to do with power, with building a one party state, it had to do with who Joshua Nkomo represented, *and how Robert Mugabe looked like a midget in the national psyche, visa-vie, Joshua Nkomo*. That's how I summarise it.”⁵¹⁴

“Joshua Nkomo was not like Mzilikazi who was basically a leader of the Zulu-Ndebele people. And Lobengula was not like Joshua Nkomo, he was a leader of the Ndebele-Zulu people. *Nkomo was a national leader*, this is why you'll find even around him here, he surrounded himself more with Shona people cause it's the majority taking the positions there, than the Ndebele people. So, it was all in good faith but, because of poor governing skills, poor management skills, purely from Mugabe and his henchmen and the excitement of being in power, and using the old historical false reasons, then they decided they're going to discipline the Matabeleland people... and Joshua Nkomo, and that to us was not right. He could not be justified.”⁵¹⁵

“...it's interesting who is a hero. Because, I think a lot of people, even from Mashonaland, have admitted that Joshua Nkomo was a hero. *Because he was a 'nationalist' guy*. You know, you will find that even within the ZIPRA leadership, he will pick people from Mashonaland, because he wanted to unite the people of Zimbabwe. And in that sense, people really understood Joshua Nkomo as a hero. That's why they ended up calling him '*Father Zimbabwe*', because he was a father of all the people of that nation. And in my point of view I'd say Joshua Nkomo was a hero.”⁵¹⁶

This could explain why ZANU-PF and Dr. Joshua Nkomo were unable to find a satisfactory role arrangement between themselves from 1980 onwards despite Nkomo

⁵¹³ Interview: TM1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 01/11/07 – (Shona Businessman whose relative was a prominent leader in the ZANU-PF government).

⁵¹⁴ Interview: JM1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 26/02/08 – (Shona Professor of Political Science in Zimbabwe).

⁵¹⁵ Interview: PK1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 30/03/07 – (A prominent member of Ndebele Royal Family).

⁵¹⁶ Interview: CM2, Kitwe, Zambia – 09/05/07 - (Ndebele teacher and community development worker with Orphans and Vulnerable Children, former Political Activist and Youth Leader for ZAPU in the early 1980s).

being offered and given various government portfolios (President, Minister of Home Affairs, and Minister without Portfolio) over that time. Some analysts and indeed Nkomo himself argued that these portfolios were mostly in name only and had little to do with meaningful function. The position of President which was eventually filled by Canaan Banana was ceremonial in nature. And it was during Nkomo's tenure as Minister of Home Affairs that the Fifth Brigade was trained and deployed in Matabeleland without his knowledge. This he considered a great affront and an undermining of his authority to oversee the internal security of the nation.

“Minister of the Patriotic Front and Minister without Portfolio, Mr. Joshua Nkomo complained over the weekend that he had not been consulted about the formation of the brigade. He charged that the unit would be used to impose a one-party State in Zimbabwe. But the Prime Minister reiterated that one-party state would only be introduced if the people wanted it.”⁵¹⁷

ZANU-PF's rituals of leader worship entrenched the political power of a few solitary leaders by widening the chasm between the broad-based citizenry and the unattainable positions of a small cadre of revolutionary leaders. Coupled with this, it also bred a spirit of fear in the peasant masses and spirit of arrogance in the leadership. *In essence, this leader veneration left no space for substitutability of leadership which would explain the continual tension between the ZANU-PF and ZAPU and the well-harnessed drive of the ZANU-PF regime to monopolise the national political landscape as a one-party state.*

5.4. Constructed Nationalism: Producing a Normative Experience

In this research ‘*constructed nationalism*’ refers to the collective bonding that occurs in the psyche of a nation when its citizenry share in a set of common experiences of reality (perceptions of ‘life as it is’). Joint observation and encounter when experienced in a group setting can lead to an agreed upon analysis and subsequently a normative interpretation of reality. This sophisticated phenomena of ‘group-think’ (or more derogatorily referred to as ‘majority rules’ or the ‘mob-mentality’) is further complicated when there is strong, autocratic leadership that asserts itself as the *translator* functioning as a *filter* of the meaning of reality for the group (nation) it is mandated to lead. In the ideal, an organic evolution of nationhood would surface these sorts of experiential affiliations of reality in the natural flow of the nation-state development.

⁵¹⁷ ‘Why fear new army brigade? – Mugabe’, (1981) *The Chronicle* (Bulawayo) 27 August.

However, if the national leadership has aligned itself to a particular preferred reality of its own devising (ideology), it can use its socio-political power coupled with the state resources and instrumentalities at its disposal to produce a *normative* national experience, thereby imposing a 'favourable' constructed reality from which it can govern out of. According to this study, it would seem clear that ZANU-PF was engaged in this strategy of '*producing a normative national experience*' from the time of independence through to the 1980s, if not beyond.

This section will argue that there were three pivotal yet highly controversial events that gave the ZANU-PF the framework to hang its nationalist narrative upon: the violent clashes that erupted between ZANLA and ZIPRA forces in *Entumbane* demobilisation camps, the 'discovery' of *arms caches* in a number of ZAPU-owned farms, and the supposed 'dissident' kidnapping and murder of a group of six white *tourists*. At the same time these particular events were also the nucleus from which counter-narratives were being incubated and eventually birthed. These multiple, oppositional narratives set in motion a disordering function imbued with an intrinsic sense of resistance and propelled by a determination to hold up an alternative truth to the dominant narrative of Zimbabwean independence sweeping the country and the world at that time.

These three incidences served a number of critical purposes for ZANU-PF's nationalist agenda. Firstly, these events provided the public with the necessary 'evidence' that ZANU-PF needed to motivate for the implementation of *Operation Gukurahundi*. Three major streams of narrative discourse surfaced around Operation Gukurahundi with each one vying for the public's attention: ZANU-PF maintained that the Gukurahundi exercise was a justified response to a state emergency, an issue of *state security* under threat. For oppositional formations and many members of civil society, it represented a means for *wiping out the opposition* (ZAPU's) support base and enforcing a one-party state. Lastly, for the masses on the ground in Matabeleland it appeared to be a violent revenge of *genocide* proportions; retribution for historical ethnic grievances and 'punishment' for the Matabele majority who did not vote for ZANU-PF in the polls in 1980 or in 1985. Certain conspiracy theorists link the 1980s massacres in Matabeleland to the printed mention of 'Gukurahundi' found in ZANU political documents dated in 1979,

thereby claiming that this onslaught against the Ndebele people was motivated by and planned for even before the events of dissidence that conspired in the post-independence era⁵¹⁸. Despite the official pronouncements of justification given by ZANU-PF, many questions remain as is clear from the below transcription:

“Maybe I’ll begin by saying what led to the *Gukurahundi* as narrated in the book [Breaking the Silence]’; the training of the *Fifth Brigade* by the Koreans, it wasn’t just by accident, it was done quietly. One would have queried if it was integration, the British were also the integrating force of the training. Why was Britain not in charge of this brigade, what was so special about it being trained by the Korean[s]? Who was this enemy whom they are supposed to have fought [against]? Why then now when it is unleashed, it is unleashed to this people [Matabele]? Then, the issue of the weapons being discovered, *arms caches* being discovered on the farms. One would have said that was common knowledge because they were armies. They could still be hiding some of the things. I don’t know whether the independence of religion in the forces would actually leave them where they were, I don’t know. Or alternatively some of these arms caches could have been actually planted, I don’t know. But these are areas people could have actually dialogued. But the way it was handled was like it was... they [ZAPU/dissidents] were already enemies and they did not weigh it out. And it also talks about ... I mentioned the run-up to the Brigade coming to existence under cloudy reasons, and then when it actually came out, it was deployed in the rural areas where food distribution was stopped. Those who had been injured could not go to the hospitals... And there was a clampdown on news from that particular area, why was there such a clamp-down? I was also not allowed in so that I can make an independent report.”⁵¹⁹

Secondly, these three events produced the shadow screen behind which to hide, or at least distract from the severe violence being meted out by the ZANU-PF-sponsored Fifth brigade. A cloud of mystery surrounds the origins of this special task brigade that was devised outside the parameters of the already established police and military strictures in place at that time, trained by North Koreans before the ‘dissident’ violence erupted in Matabeleland, and was mandated to account directly to the Prime Minister’s (Mugabe’s) office alone.

⁵¹⁸ Ndebele, Z. 2007. *Gukurahundi: A Moment of Madness*, a DVD production. While the ZANU document in question has been established by date and is photographed in the DVD the context in which the phrase ‘Gukurahundi’, a Shona word which means ‘the early rain which washes (blows) away the chaff (dirt or trash) before the spring rains’ is used is not clear. From a reading of text it would seem to indicate that ZANU was using this same phrase as a code name for its general offensive against the white Rhodesian regime. There is no definite articulation linking this reference to the Ndebele people at that time (1979).

⁵¹⁹ Interview: JN1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 29/03/07 – (Ndebele teacher and activist working for the Catholic Commission on Peace and Justice CCJP in the 1980s).

“[T]he events leading up to the establishment of the Fifth Brigade weren’t really uncovered fully until ironically the publication of the Zimbabwe Defence Force’s magazine in 1992, which recounted the history of the Fifth Brigade, *and showed that Mugabe had gone to see Kim Il Sung as early as I think August 1980 and signed the agreement which led to the deployment of North Koreans here in about October 1980*. Now, we didn’t know that until 1992. And we also didn’t know the details of the graduation, the training of the Fifth Brigade. And indeed we didn’t know what Mugabe had said at the pass-out parade in November 1982. So we have the benefit of that, that hindsight which mitigates, I suppose, to a certain extent the West’s failure to intervene.”⁵²⁰

“From hindsight it would seem to me that this was a well-planned activity that probably didn’t just happen by itself. Cause if I understand it correctly, the contract for the North Koreans to train this particular brigade was signed somewhere in the ‘80’s, I mean somewhere in 1980, thereabout or before ...of course implemented a bit later than that. *But it looks like the plans were already in place, you know. So for me it seems to be something that was well-orchestrated...*”⁵²¹

“It [Fifth brigade] was in fact conceived before 1982, but as what? Which means there is missing information. The missing information in my view has to do with ZANU PF or with Robert Mugabe’s perspective of a post-Independent Zimbabwe; a socialist one-party state, or in the mould of North Korea, really. *So, you are seeing the beginnings of putting up that project in the form of the Fifth Brigade*. But then matters overtake him in Matabeleland as the dissidents come in. We also need to look at, in fact, who were the dissidents?”⁵²²

Robert Mugabe insisted that this special ‘crack’ force was solely for internal security measures initially defining its existence as protection from outside invasions of Zimbabwe’s borders: “The brigade it should be noted, is being trained and equipped purely for the purpose of defence and not for any external use”⁵²³. To extrapolate on this further ZANU-PF played on the people’s fear and paranoia of attacks from the Mozambican ‘rebel’ movement RENAMO and incursions from the white South African Apartheid regime and their known destabilisation policies in the region.

⁵²⁰ Interview: DC1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe - 13/09/07 (White Zimbabwean Human Rights Lawyer and politician).

⁵²¹ Interview: DN3, Johannesburg, South Africa – 30/10/07 – (Ndebele NGO peace worker facilitating trauma healing and reconciliation among rural Matabeleland communities and survivors of Gukurahundi violence).

⁵²² Interview: JM1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 26/02/08 – (Shona Professor of Political Science in Zimbabwe).

⁵²³ ‘Koreans here to train a brigade’, (1981) *The Chronicle* (Bulawayo) 14 August.

“The location of the training ground has given rise to speculation that the brigade will be involved in defending the area along the sensitive Mozambique border...The Post quoted an unnamed source as saying local Africans told him that the Koreans claimed they were sent not to train the army but to ‘wipe out’ the Mozambican rebels.”⁵²⁴

“So you got this sense that there was a culture of terror. And if you dared oppose whoever was in charge, something really nasty could happen to you, and you could disappear...So all of those things happened, so you got a sense of real fear of a number of things; you feared upsetting the ruling party, you feared an invasion by the dissidents, and you feared racist South Africa, or as they called it the Pretoria regime.”⁵²⁵

Other sources would point to the resistance to the formation of the Fifth Brigade from within the ZANU-PF government ranks as evidence of the dubious motivations of this undertaking: “No, No. It was also part of the resistance of people like Solomon Mujuru. Solomon Mujuru refused the Gukurahundi project, and he was the Commander of the Army. So the Fifth Brigade *were not* part of the Zimbabwean National Army. They were recruited specifically for that project.”⁵²⁶ Nkomo as an oppositional minister in the ZANU-PF protested the creation of the brigade on numerous occasions:

“The Minister without Portfolio, Mr. Joshua Nkomo, yesterday criticised the creation of a Fifth Brigade that will deal with internal troubles, saying Zimbabwe had adequate and efficient forces of law, including the civil police to handle any internal problems... ‘It cannot be for anything else [one-party state], because we have an established army with instructors accepted publicly by all our government organs. The so-called Fifth Brigade is obviously a separate army, since it has different instructors from those we all publicly know,’ he said.”⁵²⁷

Thirdly, these three events furnished the *plot, stage, actors, props, audience* and *script* necessary for ZANU-PF to manufacture a set of well-rehearsed performances that reinforced their grand drama of national dominance that they so desperately wanted to secure (see Diagram 1, page 54). In spite of the official discourse to the contrary, a host of counter-narratives are thriving today, infused with suspicions that ZANU-PF had its hands in, if not actually orchestrated each of these happenings to ensure the outcome they

⁵²⁴ ‘Korean troops set a riddle’ (1981) *The Chronicle* (Bulawayo) 18 August.

⁵²⁵ Interview: TM1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 01/11/07 – (Shona Businessman whose relative was a prominent leader in the ZANU-PF government).

⁵²⁶ Interview: JM1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 26/02/08 – (Shona Professor of Political Science at a prominent Zimbabwean university).

⁵²⁷ ‘Nkomo queries fifth brigade’ (1981) *The Chronicle* (Bulawayo) 25 August.

desired: “Yeah, I mean, it’s a clever way of eliminating your opposition... But we know for certain that the emotions of the people have always been raged by *creating incidents* by ZANU-PF. ZANU-PF has survived like that; it creates incidents... Purely from a community analysis point-of-view, yes, there’s quite a lot that is also *stage-managed*.”⁵²⁸

In his insightful work on the Sierra Leone civil war, Paul Richards describes violence as both a *practice* and a *performance*⁵²⁹. As practice, violence and counter-violence responses are not thought out or planned in advance, but instead are ‘discovered’ along the way as violence is acted out. In the words of Richards, “Practice theory takes the standpoint that knowledge... is a product of context and action as well as of cognition and training.”⁵³⁰ In other words, there is not a strategy, the violence learning evolves and morphs as it is practiced. As performance, violence is seen as a well-orchestrated event or a series of events aimed at simulating a specific experience that in turn produces a desired response from those involved and affected by the violence. Richards clearly states it: “...performance theory tries to understand how people make power through violence and terror as expressive resources.”⁵³¹ In the Matabeleland context, the three national events being studied in this section (Entumbane, arms caches, and the tourist killings) are conceived as possessing dramaturgical significance (theatrical acts) and displaying both the dimensions of violent practice and performance at play. The narratives swirling around these events indicate that both the ZANU-PF and the various forms of resistance evident in Matabeleland were reactive (a form of practice) to events as they unfolded in the wake of independence. *However, it is also clear that ZANU-PF who had control of State resources harnessed these instrumentalities to invent scenarios of violence in order to substantiate their nationalist agenda for the future; represented by an undeterred claim and scramble to solidify life-long power.*

5.4.1. Act I: Entumbane Clashes: ZAPU/ZIPRA as ‘Sore Losers’

The first of these incidences was the combat skirmishes that broke out between ex-ZANLA and ex-ZIPRA soldiers at the *Entumbane* Assembly Points in Bulawayo in

⁵²⁸ Interview: PK1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 30/03/07 – (A prominent member of Ndebele Royal Family).

⁵²⁹ Richards, P. 1996. *Fighting for the Rain Forest: War, Youth & Resources in Sierra Leone*. The International African Institute, Oxford: James Curry & Heinemann Publishers, xxi-xxii.

⁵³⁰ Ibid: xxi.

⁵³¹ Richards, 1996: xxii.

November 1980 and again in February 1981.⁵³² These outbursts of violence were condemned by both the ZAPU and ZANU leadership and were understood as an unfortunate yet possibly ‘expected’ complication in the administration and implementation of the demobilisation process. Being that this was the first hint of problems in the newly acquired independence of the nation, both ZAPU and ZANU leaders kept a public presence of cordial calm. However, the word on the ground was different. For ZANLA supporters this was seen as ZIPRA wanting to settle the score after *losing* the Elections. For ZIPRA supporters the counter-narratives questioned the demobilisation process and birthed numerous conspiracy scripts of suspicion. A cloud of mystery shrouds this historical event compounded by the fact that the Dumbutshena Report, a government-instituted commission of inquiry mandated to investigate the Entumbane incidents has to date never been made public.⁵³³ The national and regional press explained Entumbane to the public as follows:

“The first shock to the nation came in November, when riots in Bulawayo turned into full-scale battle between ZIPRA and ZANLA guerrillas housed in the city’s Entumbane Township. For days, thousands of heavily armed men rocked the city with machine gun, mortar and rocket fire. About 60 people were killed, and more than 400 hundred wounded, before the National Army managed to regain control of the area. Most of the casualties were civilians. At three National Army bases – one in the Midlands and two in Bulawayo – former ZIPRA guerrillas turned on their ZANLA colleagues, and defied government orders to surrender. The fighting once again spread to Entumbane, and in what Mr. Mugabe claimed was ‘the sinister pattern’ of a master plan, armoured ZIPRA brigades converged on Bulawayo. The country seemed on the verge of civil war.”⁵³⁴

In the above media discourse, the blame for Entumbane is clearly laid at the feet of disgruntled ex-ZIPRA combatants. Already, early on in the news coverage, the reader will notice that Mugabe, speaking for the ZANU-PF, identifies what he terms a ‘sinister pattern of a master plan’. Contrary to most evidential research conducted since that time, this utterance by Mugabe appears to be the first of many aimed at shaping public opinion to serve the dominant ZANU-PF narrative which coloured the ZAPU-ZIPRA opposition

⁵³² There were also incidences of violence that erupted at Assembly points in the Midlands area over this time. For purposes of this study, the Entumbane clashes will be the focus as they represent the most serious of these outbreaks in terms of casualties and duration of time.

⁵³³ Breaking the Silence, 1997: xv.

⁵³⁴ Motjuwadi, S. 1981. Zimbabwe’s First Traumatic War, in Couzens, T. (ed.) *Zimbabwe – The Search for Common Ground, From the pages of Drum Magazine*, Harare, Zimbabwe: NatPrint, 317-321.

as a dangerous enemy of the State bent on destroying the newly formed Zimbabwe. In contrast, Joshua Nkomo and a number of ex-combatant voices describe the same scenario from their perspectives, placing the fault squarely on the shoulders of ZANU-PF leaders such as Enos Nkala (a provocative, fiery Ndebele politician who was a staunch supporter and founding member of ZANU-PF) and the ex-ZANLA military contingents who were stationed in the demobilisation camps:

“The first fighting occurred in Bulawayo early in November 1980. Zanu organized a party rally at the White City stadium in the western suburbs of Bulawayo. The speakers, including several Zanu ministers, insulted Zapu, insulted me as its leader, and said that all minority parties should be crushed...Immediately afterwards rifle shots were fired into the Zipra camp at Entumbane nearby. Zipra fired back into the neighbouring Zanu camp. The soldiers of both forces had been allowed by agreement to keep their personal weapons. But Zanu now brought out and used heavy weapons, mortars and rocket-launchers, which they were not entitled to possess. Civilian lives were lost and much damaged in the firing. Sixty people on all sides were killed.”⁵³⁵

“The fighting at Entumbane – well, the whole thing was provoked by politicians. I wouldn’t say it was provoked by the comrades themselves. Because I remember on the day when the first incident occurred, there was a rally which was organised by Enos Nkala at the White City Stadium, where he actually made some very bad remarks about Zapu and Zipra. And then, after that rally, some ex-Zanu combatants came back to the camp. They visited a local beer hall at Entumbane where civilians were drinking. They started beating up the civilians. So these civilians ran away and came to our camp, that is the Zipra camp. And they said, ‘No, these people are at Entumbane, they are beating us.’ Some were bleeding. So when we went to the beer hall to actually check what was happening, that’s when the shooting started. People still had their weapons.”⁵³⁶

“Right, right, I’ll tell you the story. My father’s house is in Jube, I was off. Then this man, Enos Nkala, made a rally. He only announced that ‘*everyone* who belongs to ZIPRA is going to be finished today. *Anyone* who follows under Nkomo is going to be suffocated today. *All* small ethnic groups, I’m going to wipe them’. ZANU has got Youth, also ZIPRA, the Youth came direct to us. I was in the house, just a small boy. They said ‘ah, do you know what Nkala said today?’ I said ‘no’. ‘He is going to beat you today, go to the camp!’ I went to the camp. Unfortunately these ZANLA boys started to fire guns. It was a terrible time. So many people disappeared. I almost lost my younger brother. I lost him. So the British [Rhodesian soldiers] did the *same* thing, I’m just worried about these people, Mr Man. They deployed their Army along this road to defend Mugabe and the city, they were waving heavy weapons to us, instead of defending us.

⁵³⁵ Nkomo, J. 1984. *Nkomo – The Story of My Life*. London: Methuen, 219.

⁵³⁶ Yap, K. 2001: 136.

Yes, they fired heavy arms, to us. But they were supposed to just fly over air, don't fight, the war is over. But instead, they supported the ZANU-PF government; destroying us."⁵³⁷

In the above transcriptions, while reductionist thinking would tend to focus on the inciting words of individual *politicians* (like Enos Nkala) and / or the issue of *instigation* (who shot first and who brought in the heavy artillery), the deeper concern appears to be what the implications of these accusations represent. If ex-ZIPRA fighters can be assumed guilty, ZANU-PF has the necessary 'evidence' to maintain its narrative of being under siege. If ex-ZANLA fighters can be assumed guilty, ZAPU has the necessary 'evidence' to cling to its convictions that ZANU intended to destroy all opposition, or in the extreme to destroy all Ndebele people. Of interest is to note that all of these scripts bemoan the magnitude of civilian casualties with all sides assuming a defensive posture in an attempt to exonerate themselves from this violence. The last interviewee speaks of his sense of betrayal as the ex-Rhodesian and ex-ZANLA forces united against the ex-ZIPRA fighting units. In the minds of some Ndebele (ZAPU-ZIPRA supporters) this apparent 'treachery' has evolved into a conspiracy theory that musters up a preferential portrayal of ZIPRA as the '*scapegoats*' in the scramble for power after independence:

"Actually I couldn't know because I was not a soldier. But what I heard; I was in my house at Mpumla East, I heard the sound of a gun during the evening and the whole night, till the next morning, it was firing from Entumbane. And I saw some of the soldiers ...there was mielies [corn] that was planted all over and they were hiding in those mielies. And actually I did not see them shooting each other but I heard the sound. What I saw was the plane. I think Dabengwa was inside that plane telling people that you are surrounded by the soldiers so 'keep in your houses, don't move', that is what I heard. And many people told me that the Army that was stationed, I think in Esgodini... I think even the *Army for Smith* helped this people, helped *the people of Mugabe* to kill those people. I think they ambushed them next to this University [of] Technology. Many people were killed there...*I think the ZIPRA Forces.*"⁵³⁸

In this text, ZIPRA is characterised as the innocent victim, 'ambushed' by the traitorous ZANU-PF in collaboration with the white Rhodesian military. What is less evident, is the embedded sense of marginalisation that seeps through this script as the speaker clearly

⁵³⁷ Interview: AN2, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 12/09/07 – (Ndebele Ex-ZIPRA Soldier).

⁵³⁸ Interview: MS2, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 11/09/07 - (Ndebele male, rural farmer from Tsholotsho, Matabeleland and primary survivor of Gukurahundi violence).

distances himself from any nationalist project by using the language of ‘us/them’ when referring to the ‘Army for Smith’ (ex-Rhodesian soldiers) and the ‘people of Mugabe’ (the ZANU-PF political party).

However, in the psyche of the Ndebele people there is an ambiguous paradox in relation to this enabling label of victimhood. As if representing the two faces of the Roman god ‘Janus’⁵³⁹, the Ndebele nation continually struggles with the inherent tensions of embracing both victim and victor throughout their historical trajectory. When the opportunistic space avails itself, the posture of victim is easily endorsed, however, just as frequently, the patriotic Ndebele identity is resuscitated in order to salvage the ego of the fighting spirit of Ndebele pride and to re-establish the warrior’s honour. Instead of adopting the ‘Ndebele-as-victim’ perspective, the following respondents analyse Entumbane as a military and spatial contestation between ZIPRA and ZANLA:

“But it happened that at that very time when the Freedom Fighters were now at Assemble points, there was this Entumbane incident where we heard that there was misunderstanding between these two camps; the ZIPRA and the ZANLA. And fighting erupted. It was a very tough fighting. And many people believe...these particularly from Matabeleland and from those that were sympathizing with ZIPRA, that that was the time the ZIPRA Forces were to take over from the ZANU-PF. Because the ZANLA Forces were really moved out of the camp and the ZIPRA Forces were really taking control but, Joshua Nkomo had to fly up with his plane and told ZIPRA Forces not to go on with that move. I think that really threatened the ZANU-PF and they saw that the ZIPRA Forces were very strong and they would in any case do something that really they were not expecting.”⁵⁴⁰

“And...the skirmishes in Entumbane, the skirmishes in certain areas even in Harare, indicated that ZIPRA was even a stronger Force at that time than ZANLA was. If they wanted to do so, they could have done so. Thanks to people like Dabengwa and Joshua Nkomo from the ZANU-PF point-of-view that actually stopped that scenario otherwise the ... one of the bitterness the Ndebele people probably have is that probably...probably with the augustly feeling that we shouldn’t have had too much blood spilling, everyone has no positive feeling for that, probably a war needed to have been allowed to occur between the Shonas and Ndebele at that time to its definite end, so that the people would be defeated;

⁵³⁹ The Roman god ‘Janus’ was believed to have two faces, one looking backwards and the other looking forwards. Janus is the word from which the Western world derived the name for the month of January. See also: Nairn, T. 1975. The Modern Janus. *New Left Review*, Vol. I, No. 94: November-December Issue.

⁵⁴⁰ Interview: CM2, Kitwe, Zambia – 09/05/07 - (Ndebele teacher and community development worker with Orphans and Vulnerable Children, former Political Activist and Youth Leader for ZAPU in the early 1980s).

and if Ndebeles were defeated, they would have accepted to be defeated, and if ZANU would have been defeated, they should have accepted to be defeated. But because those skirmishes were stopped, and there was no clear result at the end, then obviously you've got two bulls in one kraal. And that's exactly why ZANU-PF needed now to fight; this was a bull to the end and want[ed] to win the war. And win it in all sorts of ways by creating...they had more resources at that time because they were now in government. They had to create situations to try and make sure that they destroy ZAPU and ZIPRA.”⁵⁴¹

According to these texts, not only were ZIPRA and ZANLA locked in a contest of war, but ZIPRA had the military advantage and if these two fighting groups would have been afforded the opportunity to battle until the end, ZIPRA would have been victorious in driving out ZANLA. Of continual intrigue is to see the parlance of unconscious identity confusion being played out again. References are made to these Entumbane skirmishes being a battle between ethnicities as in the ‘Shona and Ndebele’, as opposed to political party rivals ZANU and ZAPU, and at one point the last respondent juxtapositions the Ndebele (ethnic group) to ZANU (political party) in relation to accepting defeat had this battle been allowed to take its full course.

The discourse of ‘two bulls in the same kraal’ found in the second paragraph articulates the traditional, hierarchical military ‘zero-sum’ thinking in which all order must flow from only one head and therefore there must always be a ‘winner’ and a ‘loser’ in every conflict. This ‘winner-takes-all’ mentality leaves no imagination for the conception of shared leadership; equal but multiple in nature. The latter respondent naively infers that if a ‘fair’ military competition had been allowed to take its full and final course, it would have neatly arranged the combating parties in demarcations of the ‘victorious’ or the ‘defeated’ and each grouping would have accepted their lot thereby eradicating any confusion or competition between ZAPU-ZIPRA and ZANU-ZANLA and their respective followers. Yet others interpreted Entumbane as a territorial conflict; a contest over proximity and the control of location (in this case the city of Bulawayo). Reminiscent of the 1929 and 1960 urban riots of Bulawayo (see Chapter 2, Literature Review), this respondent promulgated a thickened and layered description of Entumbane laced with the *politics of recognition*:

⁵⁴¹ Interview: PK1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 30/03/07 – (A prominent member of Ndebele Royal Family).

“You see, Entumbane, again...there were mixed reactions to it. Of course the people are saying ‘Bulawayo is our city’, and if you put a ZIPRA here and ZANLA there, ZANLA will again [be seen as an] invasion force. This city Bulawayo is the city of Ndebeles, and of course when Entumbane broke out, I understand the people in the location actually celebrated. Had we told these people that it will happen this way and they are now pushing them [ZANLA] out. Again, it was copped in ethnic terms. Even if you talk to some of the people who participated there, they will tell you we were actually listening even if people were passing, what language they are speaking. So that thing was reduced really to sort of a mini-tribal conflict. But the cause, again it goes back to personal grievances between people within the ZIPRA or in those camps. There was always that feeling that we are being undermined, we are not being recognized.”⁵⁴²

The researched explanations for this outburst of violence at Entumbane are multiple. Firstly, the demobilisation process was becoming considerably extended in nature. Eager, idealistic ex-combatants were running out of patience with their ‘holding pattern’ existence in the demobilization camps. High expectations for military reintegration, employment, education and prosperity heightened the intensity of interest and energy on the part of ex-combatants to experience the transformative change of the new Zimbabwe they had diligently fought for.

“Having armed soldiers sitting around in buildings rather than in tents, in cities rather than mountains and valleys, did nothing to ease the mounting frustration and uncertainty we all felt. Indeed, it actually made things worse, for now we were mixing socially with Zanla comrades in a situation which sectarianism and recrimination had become part and parcel of everyday political argument. I am convinced that it was a serious mistake not to transfer us to barracks. The decision to shunt us from one assembly point to another was simply an opportunistic sop to the Rhodesians who naturally could not stomach the thought that we were disciplined soldiers and not a rabble of wild terrorists.”⁵⁴³

Secondly, many ZIPRA supporters questioned how those in authority could position two competing liberation armies (who were known to still be armed and who had a serious history of hostility throughout the struggle) in such close proximity in a densely populated urban centre and yet not expect any trouble. Using an indigenous proverb, one interviewee described this dilemma as follows: “In Ndebele they say you don’t hit or beat

⁵⁴² Interview: SG1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 20/12/07 - (Ndebele Professor of Political Science, researcher and author).

⁵⁴³ Yap, K. 2001: 136.

the dog while you hide the stick (‘Awushayiinja ufihle umphini’).”⁵⁴⁴ By this the respondent was referring to what appeared to be ‘behind the scene’ manoeuvring by a third-force, either the former Rhodesian Army which was running the Assembly Points and wanted to make it appear as if the newly elected Black government was unable to govern the nation, or as an intentional set-up by ZANU-PF government in order to provoke ZIPRA to fight ZANLA, thereby giving them ‘justification’ to eliminate the opposition. In either case, what is generally accepted in much of the Matabeleland populace is that the circumstances surrounding Entumbane were arranged in such a way that overt conflict was bound to erupt between the ex-ZIPRA and ex-ZANLA troops who were already well-entrenched in a relational legacy of suspicion and ill-feeling one for the other.

“And during the time of ceasefire, when there was this Lancaster talks and the Freedom Fighters were asked to go to Assembly Points, most of the ZANLA Forces which were operating in Matabeleland, didn’t go to the Assembly Points. *Because they were saying ‘they are still waiting, they just want to see whether Mugabe goes to power. If he doesn’t go, they are going back to war’. And people in Matabeleland were also saying ‘if Nkomo doesn’t go to power, we are going to war.’*”⁵⁴⁵

“So it [Entumbane] was a way of trying to sort each other. You see this *mistrust* did not only start at Entumbane. It started in Tanzania some years back... So then, they tell us of an incident where there were two training camps in Tanzania, one belonging to Joshua Nkomo’s ZAPU and then the other was Ndabaningi Sithole [ZANU]. However, you see, it is highly said that behind the creation of ZANU-PF was the President of Tanzania, Julius Nyerere. So he favoured, you see, ZANU-PF. But on the other hand you had Kenneth Kaunda [Zambia] which favoured Joshua Nkomo. So Nyerere then discussed with ZANU-PF...to say that Joshua Nkomo’s forces had to be eliminated. Hence the attack that was unleashed on Joshua Nkomo. And soldiers tell us, you see ZIPRA forces will tell us that they had to move on foot all the way from Tanzania all the way to Zambia. And how villagers would give them some food on the way...So therefore this *mistrust* that

⁵⁴⁴ Interview: BK1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 26/06/06 - (Ndebele ZAPU politician and professor in the 1980s who fled into exile from 1983-1985 after surviving several death attempts during the period of Gukurahundi violence).

⁵⁴⁵ Interview: CM2, Kitwe, Zambia – 09/05/07 - (Ndebele teacher and community development worker with Orphans and Vulnerable Children, former Political Activist and Youth Leader for ZAPU in the early 1980s).

has been there is something that has developed over the years. And so as soon as the soldiers were near next to each other, such an incident would erupt.”⁵⁴⁶

“I understand there was a misunderstanding, and ZANU wanted ... I don’t know how I can put it: ... *ZIPRA were not satisfied, yes they were not satisfied with everything and the fact [that] ZAPU must be swallowed*, yes. So the ZIPRA Forces didn’t like it and they started a war, and a lot of people died. I remember when I went to hospital...why I had a shock, I saw corpses taken to the mortuary, dead bodies, and there was a smell which I still remember. And my husband was out there. And if Nkomo didn’t just fly to stop that fight, I don’t know what would have happened. And Nkomo had authority, he didn’t use torture, but his voice had authority: He just announced that ‘stop’. And because there was a [military] camp in the Gwayi, and they [ex-fighters] were coming in with those big machines...So Nkomo had to fly and stop that.”⁵⁴⁷

Thirdly, the climate surrounding the nation-building experiment in Zimbabwe was highly politicised and emotionally charged with ZANU splitting away from the ‘Patriotic Front’ (a structural attempt to unite the liberation movements) and choosing to run against ZAPU in the National Elections in 1980. After the release of the Election results revealing a landslide victory for ZANU-PF, Joshua Nkomo narrated the mood of the ex-ZIPRA soldiers and the climate in the Assembly Points:

“The soldiers in particular were distraught: the Zipra commanders had used every ounce of their personal authority to persuade the men to stay quietly in their assembly points throughout the election campaign, despite many provocations. Now they would have to go back to those soldiers and tell them they had been cheated but must accept it. To my relief and gratitude I found that my colleagues accepted my bitter analysis: there was nothing for it but to swallow the result and trust that the alleged victors would use their triumph generously and in good faith.”⁵⁴⁸

In 1982, Mugabe took it upon himself to publicly declare Nkomo’s ‘true’ intentions in direct contradiction to the above-mentioned sentiments expressed by Nkomo in his autobiography in 1984: “Now what Nkomo wanted to show you, the people of Zimbabwe, was that you had no right to reject him. These weapons were being amassed

⁵⁴⁶ Interview: FN1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 26/10/07 – (Ndebele Finance Manager and former employee of the ZANU-PF Ministry of Finance and the National Oil Company of Zimbabwe in the early 1980s).

⁵⁴⁷ Interview: JD1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 15/09/06 – (Female Ndebele NGO activist advocating for women and refugees rights).

⁵⁴⁸ Nkomo, J. 1984: 210-211.

so that he would teach you he cannot be rejected. When you reject him, as you did [in the elections], he fights against you.”⁵⁴⁹

Thus, in theatrical language, *Act I* (Entumbane) of the ZANU-PF nationalist drama was now in place. Whether a well-orchestrated plan or an opportunistic response to a cascading set of events, the curtain was lifted. The *plot* was straight forward; in order to establish its nationalist agenda ZANU-PF needed to discredit ZAPU as a legitimate opposition. The *stage* became the Assembly Points (demobilisation camps) restricted spaces in cramped urban settings where historical ‘enemies’ were housed in close proximity to each other. The *actors* were the ex-ZIPRA and ex-ZANLA fighters, exhausted, suspicious soldiers who were both apprehensive about their future and frustrated with the lack of integration progress in the present. Their army commanders played the role of drama *coaches* charged with exhorting, disciplining and cajoling the actors (ex-combatants) into an orderly performance of subservience. The national and regional level politicians (both ZAPU and ZANU-PF) played the roles of *producers* / *directors* translating each dramatic scene, blocking out the movements of each protagonist and managing the change of each stage set. The *props* they utilised consisted of their armaments on which they had become dependent; weaponry that was never surrendered, buried under shallow ground in case of any contingent emergencies. The *audience* was regional in scope; a captive population of Matabeleland civilians and the known base of the ZAPU oppositional stronghold. Finally, the *script* was well-rehearsed; punishing as it reprimanded ZAPU for being ‘spoil sports’ (poor losers) and stringent in its disdainful staging of a scene where ZAPU-ZIPRA were ‘exposed’ as renegade malcontents bent on destabilising the burgeoning national agenda of a free Zimbabwe.

5.4.2. Act II: Arms Caches: ZAPU/ZIPRA as plotting a ‘Coup de Tat’

The second and most serious (as well as controversial incident) was the ‘discovery’ of *arms caches* on a number of ZAPU-owned farms in February 1982. This revelation seemed to be all the evidence the ZANU-PF needed to confirm its claim that the ZAPU-ZIPRA alliance through its ‘dissidents’ were treacherously plotting to overthrow a democratically-elected government. Joshua Nkomo and other top ZAPU leaders were dismissed from government, key ex-ZIPRA military commanders, Dumiso

⁵⁴⁹ ‘Danger is Not Over Yet, Says Mugabe’ (1982) *The Herald* (Harare). 1 March.

Dabengwa and Lookout Masuku, were arrested and held on treason charges and the ZANU-PF was swift to officially and publicly deploy the brutal Fifth Brigade in Matabeleland and the Midlands in order to secure 'law and order' again.

"Then [after Entumbane] things generally settled down and Zimbabwe got on until February when there was the big split, I think it was February 1982, it was. February 1982 it was, when Mugabe claimed that Joshua Nkomo and others had arms caches throughout the country, and they were plotting to overthrow the government. I remember that very, very well because he made this...because Mugabe made these charges at a press conference, the national press and the international press. And I was there. And then he listed at great detail how many AK47's, how many mortars, how many rounds of ammunition, I mean you know what-what-what has been found in the farms surrounding...outside Bulawayo. And then he said he had no recourse, you know, he was forced to dismiss Nkomo and other ZAPU...former ZAPU...cabinet ministers, there was no longer a government of national unity, and he had arrested Dumiso Dabengwa, Masuku, and they will be charged with treason. And that was the beginning then of what became the Matabeleland massacres really. I think that set off a chain of events which then led to the Matabeleland massacres."⁵⁵⁰

The performance nature of the events swirling around the so-called 'discovery' of these arms caches is considerably more striking than in the first 'act' of Entumbane. ZANU-PF, by now completely intoxicated by its hold on power, had begun perfecting its ability to stage-manage its nationalist agenda by fixing the time-line by which the plot would unfold, by controlling the socio-political machinery (security, media, education) of the State and by successfully trumping any resistance with its eloquent oration of reality. Blurred and blinded by the emotive hype of their newly acquired independence, most of the public failed to see these events as constructed phenomena at the time; only in hindsight did this view surface. Joshua Nkomo illuminates this attempt by ZANU-PF to skilfully master-mind the propaganda and the outcomes deriving from this 'discovery':

"Munangagwa [Minister of State responsible for Security], without mentioning it to me, went straight to Ascot Farm [located near Bulawayo], to which he had summoned the press, radio and television. Next day he and then the Prime Minister announced on the radio and TV that massive stocks of weapons had been found at the two farms. There was, they said, a plot to overthrow the government with the help of South Africa. The man responsible was Joshua Nkomo...I was not only a minister in the government, but a member of the cabinet committee on

⁵⁵⁰ Interview: AM1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 10/08/06 – (White American Journalist who lived in Zimbabwe from 1980 until he was deported by the ZANU-PF government).

security. If there were indeed suspicions against me, I had the right to be asked by the Prime Minister to offer my own explanation. If stocks of weapons had indeed been found on properties under my control, I would expect to be shown the evidence and asked to account for its presence...Instead I was told nothing about the allegations...until they had given the widest possible publicity by the state press and broadcasting monopolies...the discovery was exaggerated by the government, then exploited as a means of discrediting my party, Zapu and expelling me from the government.”⁵⁵¹

Other respondents exhibited a common assumption or interpretation of these arms

‘discoveries’ as a manufactured set of events:

“Yes. In fact... it was these defections, and you will remember or you will recall that initially there was an uprising which began I think 1980; ‘81 Entumbane, and ‘82 when this so-called discovery of this arms cache, it was actually said to be one of the things that exacerbated an already volatile situation which the government had already failed to address adequately. So there are some strong opinions that even this so-called discovery of arms cache in Matabeleland was...*stage-managed*. It is also known and there are some very strong opinions that effect...at that material time both the ZIPRA and ZANLA armies had not completely demobilized and some of them had in fact withheld or hidden some of their weaponry or military cache...It will not also be far-fetched to say that there ‘was’ a discovery of an arms cache in Matabeleland but ‘what’ might be disputed in some quarters is that the *sincerity*, the *timing* and the *way* the government reacted, and the manipulated discovery, to then descend on defenceless and unarmed people and cause such unnecessary loss of life and persecution.”⁵⁵²

“You do have Robert Mugabe writing down the sins of Joshua Nkomo, really with the intention of eventually getting rid of Joshua Nkomo, getting rid of ZAPU. And then you do have the frontline states, mediating and, you know, and forcing the liberation movements to come and work together under the banner of Patriotic Front. But Robert Mugabe very quickly snaps that broken before the 1980 Elections. And so, just like the current MDC [opposition party], they go into the elections separately and Robert Mugabe then is again persuaded, largely by the British, to bring back in not just Joshua Nkomo, but even elements from Ian Smith. And, you know, because of the carrot, which was badly needed, he agrees and has a government of national unity. But really, it was really *pretence*, because it was dominated by his own party. And then it lasts very short as the arms caches are found at the farms and all hell breaks loose, and Joshua Nkomo runs out of Zimbabwe, and so forth. It was really Mugabe saying [in] a major way, a very quick way of creating a one party socialist state is to get rid of ZAPU. Destroy ZAPU...”⁵⁵³

⁵⁵¹ Nkomo, J. 1984: 224-226.

⁵⁵² Interview: SD1, Johannesburg, South Africa - 18/08/06 – (Shona Human Rights Lawyer).

⁵⁵³ Interview: JM1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 26/02/08 – (Shona Professor of Political Science in Zimbabwe).

“Yes, yes, I think that was...Mugabe’s a cunning, just like a snake. I think it was his *trick* to...there were arms but I think they were all from outside, neh? But I think Mugabe was using that...I was not much in politics by then but I think it was a *trick* also, yes.”⁵⁵⁴

Embedded in the above three interview extracts are clusters of phraseology from the voices of Matabele citizens placing a distrustful distance between themselves and the credibility of the ZANU-PF grand plot of uncovering major arms caches. Phrasing that questions the sincerity, timing and way that ZANU-PF handled this crisis coupled with descriptive words such as ‘pretence’, ‘cunning’ and ‘trickery’ speak to the dubious manner in which much of Matabeleland responded to these arms ‘discoveries.’ The critical issue in this scenario of remembered history seems to be less about whether or not arms caches *existed*, and more about the suspicious methodology employed by ZANU-PF to manage this chaotic situation.

Once again, a host of explanative counter-narratives began to emerge from the ranks of ZAPU-ZIPRA. The primary narrative around the arms caches was that all the liberation movements (including ZANLA) had stock-piled weapons during the peace negotiations and subsequent demobilization of soldiers. Guarded scepticism among the politicians on all sides was extremely high and even higher among their leery, armed structures. The risks surrounding these transition activities were abundantly clear; anyone who had fought in this bitter civil war was now on full alert in case the call to pick-up arms was sounded again. Most respondents agreed that weapons stock-piling during this time was occurring:

“You see, all ex-combatants whom I’ve talked to so far, they have their caches, either as individuals or as groups. Nobody was certain, you know, they are military-trained people, they are not certain about things. And everybody will tell you “ah, where I operated, if ever I go today, I will get my things as I know where they are”. So to me, I think Arms Caches were there, but not that massive thing that was uncovered. *But I think it was actually a plot which was put, and it was uncovered at a particular point for particular purposes.* Generally there were Arms Caches at both ex-combatants, be it ZIPRA or ZANLA, they were not certain about the future so they cached a lot of arms, throughout the country. Because I don’t believe anybody has gone around collecting all of them. And talking...lucky enough I have four brothers who have been ex-ZIPRA

⁵⁵⁴ Interview: JD1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 15/09/06 – (Female Ndebele NGO activist advocating for women and refugees rights).

combatants. And all of them will tell you ‘Where I operated, if I go today, I will still find my guns somewhere there’; everybody was caching.”⁵⁵⁵

“Ja, the Arms cache ... it ‘might’ be true. Some of the arms cache like for instance ones which were found in our area, those were ZAPU arms cache. I know because I really know the commanders of that. I think there was that *mistrust* within the ZANU-PF cadres to hand over the whole... There was that sort of *mistrust*. Some of the cadres didn’t trust Mugabe. So it might be true because even in my area I know where exactly those arms caches were found. And those who were found responsible for those were the leaders of ZANU-PF and they agreed.”⁵⁵⁶

“The Arms Cache, yes it could be *stage-managed*, and ZIPRA could have had Arms Cache. Because they had ammunition, they had the batons, they had pashushka’s, they had AK’s, they had all sorts of sophisticated equipment, probably better than ZANLA had, like I indicated earlier. They are likely to have had Arms Caches because they had brought in their arms into the country. But the reason for having those arms caches may not necessarily have been to topple Robert Mugabe’s government. It was storage scenario’s that needed to be brought into government so that government rehabilitates those arms in a better way with the nation building exercise. Now, government was aware of those arms caches, they probably certainly belonged to ZIPRA, but the reason for them was not... I don’t think it was there to topple Robert Mugabe. Because if they needed to do so, ZIPRA was a very strong Force; they could have done that easily.”⁵⁵⁷

ZIPRA defended itself by claiming the arms caches that were uncovered were due to be handed over to the African National Congress (ANC) and its armed wing Umkhonto we Sizwe in their struggle to liberate themselves from the Apartheid regime in South Africa. This was quite plausible in that the armed struggles in the region often assisted each other in training, financial and armaments resources and actual combat support. ZAPU was known to have had a close working relationship with the ANC for many years.

“There is that theory that the arms belonged to the African National Congress because you know from the Matabeleland region, in order to access South Africa, you could move from Zambia and then come through, pass through Zimbabwe and then on your way to South Africa. So therefore the African National

⁵⁵⁵ Interview: SG1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 20/12/07 - (Ndebele Professor of Political Science, researcher and author).

⁵⁵⁶ Interview: RM1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 14/09/06 – (Ndebele former security officer for opposition party and survivor of severe torture as a political prisoner under the ZANU-PF government).

⁵⁵⁷ Interview: PK1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 30/03/07 – (A prominent member of Ndebele Royal Family).

Congress, Umkhonto we Sizwe had been stock-piling arms and therefore it brought its arms over to Zimbabwe. There is that theory.”⁵⁵⁸

“Do you know, during the Liberation movement, ZIPRA and the ANC were ‘soul fathers’. Some of them operated together. The agreement was this: whether they want it or not, I’m going to make it clear, after Independence Mr. Man, it was agreed that the ANC Freedom Fighters they must get their weapons here, than to come from Zambia to here it was very difficult for them. So the weapons must be ‘here’. So they crossed the Zambezi, so they must get the weapons from here then go to South Africa, for the MK, the Umkhonto-boys. So the government agreed to that, even Mugabe himself. He knew exactly there’s something like this. As Nkomo agreed to this, he didn’t know what was behind Mugabe’s mind.”⁵⁵⁹

“Actually we heard that there were Arms Cache[s] there but when some of the people who knew about that, told us that those Arms were not for ZAPU, they were for the Umkhonto we Sizwe. I don’t know how truthful is that. But they were kept here just because, when we fought we used the Zambia...this was becoming base for South Africa but it was tended to be ZAPU caches. So they couldn’t say ‘no’ because it would be selling the brothers in South [Africa].”⁵⁶⁰

In his autobiography, Nkomo explained that after independence ZAPU had embarked on a rigorous plan of land redistribution by purchasing as many farms as possible in order to spawn viable agricultural co-ops for the returning ex-ZIPRA soldiers. These farms then became the locations where arms could have been stored. More importantly, these farms represented the well-resourced base of ZAPU as a legitimate political opposition and were indications of a well-articulated and orchestrated political strategy of land reform and economic reintegration for the ex-combatants returning from exile.⁵⁶¹ For all practical purposes, ZANU-PF as a party did not have a political platform of this calibre to offer returning war veterans and these farms thus, posed a threat to the post-independence ZANU-PF regime.

⁵⁵⁸ Interview: FN1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 26/10/07 – (Ndebele Finance Manager and former employee of the ZANU-PF Ministry of Finance and the National Oil Company of Zimbabwe in the early 1980s).

⁵⁵⁹ Interview: AN2, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 12/09/07 – (Ndebele Ex-ZIPRA Soldier).

⁵⁶⁰ Interview: MS2, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 11/09/07 - (Ndebele male, rural farmer from Tsholotsho, Matabeleland and primary survivor of Gukurahundi violence).

⁵⁶¹ Todd, J. 2007. *Through the Darkness – A Life in Zimbabwe*. Cape Town: Zebra Press. This memoir written by political activist and daughter of Sir Garfield Todd (a prominent Prime Minister of Rhodesia) recounts the history of the Zimbabwe Project Trust (ZPT), the NGO she helped to found that advocated and administrated ex-combatant reintegration. Launched in Bulawayo through discussions with ex-ZIPRA soldiers initially, the ZPT facilitated land acquisition and resettlement (farms) and income generation schemes with both ex-ZIPRA and ex-ZANLA veterans across the nation.

“The other problem that could have created fear in ZANU-PF is that ZAPU had structures, political structures, which had enabled it to plan their future should they get into government. To an extent that economically they were more stronger than ZANU at that time. And then they bought farms. They had projects, you know the chicken project here in Bulawayo, the projects...the Snake Park in Harare, farms in and around Harare and Bulawayo; all those they wanted to use that economic base as a springboard should they come into government. But because these overlapped into a situation where they had lost the elections and ZANU-PF had got into control, then ZANU-PF captured that situation as negative to their scenario. *But it had been a long-term plan, it had not been a plan for against ZANU, it had been a plan as far as the nation is concerned.* And this is why you can see the distribution of those projects were not in Matabeleland only but they were nationwide.”⁵⁶²

“And then, the big lie, where it is a lie or it is true, it has never really been proved, that arms caches were found at the twenty-five farms allegedly owned by ZAPU. And so the government moved swiftly to take those farms and to remove those, you know weapons. *What we know for now is that what they really removed from some of those farms were ZAPU war records*, you know, and a lot of invaluable material was lost to ZAPU because files and files which had just been brought in from Zambia were at one or two of these farms and disappeared without trace, yes, you know. There are reports that some of that material may be at the ZANU-PF headquarters today. But nobody’s actually had any independent, you know, access to that information.”⁵⁶³

The above-mentioned respondent suggests that the ‘discovery’ of arms caches served two purposes: not only was it meant to discredit and dismantle ZAPU as an opposition, but by also removing and supposedly disposing of vital ZAPU war records, ZANU-PF was able to effectively and in a somewhat clandestine manner subjugate and eventually erase the only other viable historical counter-narrative of revolutionary legitimacy that existed outside of their own. Thus, not only was ZANU-PF producing its own preferred nationalist script it was at the same time finding ways to eradicate the traces of alternative resistance narratives that would serve to expose their meta-narrative of reality that the nation was being obliged to live by.

After the discovery of arms caches, Nkomo fled Zimbabwe into Botswana and eventually Dabengwa and Masuku were exonerated as the court could not find enough evidence linking the arms caches to a plot to overthrow the government. However, they

⁵⁶² Interview: PK1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 30/03/07 – (A prominent member of Ndebele Royal Family).

⁵⁶³ Interview: JM1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 26/02/08 – (Shona Professor of Political Science in Zimbabwe).

remained in prison custody four and five years respectively before they were released. Masuku was released on emergency health reasons and died shortly thereafter and Dabengwa was only released in 1987. There remains a cloud of scepticism around these events. Many ZAPU-ZIPRA supporters would say that these arms caches may even have been *planted* on the farms by Zimbabwean CIO agents in an attempt to utterly discredit and eliminate the opposition.

“When we entered the assembly points in 1980 it was said that we would be demobilised and we did not know what the future held. As commissar of the Zipra unit, I got some people together to discuss our future. We decided to collect money – 50 [Zimbabwean] dollars from each Zipra combatant – to buy farms for agricultural projects. It was an apolitical thing. Dr. Joshua Nkomo was approached to help buy the farms with the \$ 2.6 million that had been collected. So are we going to blame Dr. Nkomo for anything illegal that we find on these farms?...We [Zipra combatants] that raised the money to buy the farms want to know who planted the arms caches on the properties.”⁵⁶⁴

In dramaturgical summary, if the Entumbane incidences discredited the opposition as ‘poor losers’, the *plot* of *Act II* (discovery of arms caches) attempted to entrench a characterisation of the ZAPU-ZIPRA alliance as a deceitful, violent aggressor in the unfolding story of Zimbabwean nationalism. Uncovering stock-piled weapons in general would not do, because even ZANLA was guilty of this, the armaments needed to be linked to the infra-structural base of the ZAPU opposition. The network of twenty-five ZAPU-owned farms across the country hosted the perfect *stage* from which to act out the sinister expose of ‘supposed’ treachery. The *actors* for this performance were the political and military leaders (both ZANU-PF and ZAPU) overseeing the Zimbabwean transition to independence. The ZANU-PF politico-military command featured prominently as the defenders and protectors of Zimbabwe, the ZAPU-ZIPRA leaders faced humiliation; accused of traitorous activity, chased from the country, thrown out of government and imprisoned for high treason. The large caches of armaments once again served as the primary *props* meticulously counted and continually rehearsed for the feeding frenzy of the national and international media desperate for news to sell on the great Zimbabwe nationalist project. Moving from a regional production, the *audience* was now expanded to include the whole nation; incorporating an eager Shona majority

⁵⁶⁴ ‘Who planted Arms? Asks Zipra Man’ (1982) *The Herald (Harare)* 16 February (printed interview with Riversand Mlilo, Zipra Commissar).

who had to date received restricted sound-bites of news on the ‘disturbances’ in Matabeleland through the highly filtered conduit of the State-sanctioned press. The *script* was layered with the most insidious of accusations that of being ‘counter-revolutionaries’ thereby undermining the revolutionary DNA of the ZAPU-ZIPRA alliance and tearing at the core fabric of their motivation for garnering their noble identity as freedom fighters.

5.4.3. Act III: Tourist Killings: ZAPU/ZIPRA as a threat to the International Community

The third incident was the mysterious abduction and subsequent killing of six foreign white *tourists* on 23 July of 1982 in Matabeleland. In the glare of the international media spot-light, ZAPU leaders blamed ‘bandits’ (criminal thugs) and the ZANU-PF government became more shrill in its response blaming this violence on the (supposed ZAPU-ZIPRA supported) ‘dissidents’ who according to ZANU-PF *now* posed a terrorism threat of *international* proportions.

“There were statements from ZAPU leader Joshua Nkomo throughout the year, appealing to the dissidents – ‘Whoever you are, stop it and stop it now.’ However, antagonism between the two parties hardened: such appeals were treated as mere ‘showmanship’, as the belief that ‘ZAPU is responsible for this banditry and this is clear’, took an unshakable hold in Mashonaland. There were statements from various ZANU-PF Ministers during 1982, advising people in Matabeleland to cease supporting dissidents before ‘the wrath of the 5 Brigade’ was unleashed on them.”⁵⁶⁵

“And I remember seeing that there were a couple of bus robberies in Matabeleland, on the main road, between Victoria Falls and Bulawayo. And I was reading about these on Ziana, the Zimbabwe state news agency. And they said that armed guys went and robbed the bus. Okay and that you know. And then they said ‘*Zimbabwe is not yet free*’. And I thought ‘oh, this is taking a political thing’. And then came the kidnapping of six foreign tourists on that road between Victoria Falls and Bulawayo. And they were kind of back-packer tourists and they were, if my memory serves me correctly, it was two Americans, two Australians and two British, six men. The girl... there were females in the group and they were released. *But this was again, oh, we had a big news story, of international importance.* And then, what I had noticed: before some odd bus robberies but now, this was the big deal. And it was clear, okay, there was a group of alienated deserters from the Zimbabwean army who were protesting violently against the Mugabe government. And specifically against Mugabe government’s sacking of

⁵⁶⁵ CCJPZ & LRF. 1997. *Breaking the Silence, Building True Peace – A Report on the Disturbances in Matabeleland and the Midlands 1980-1988*. Harare: Legal Resources Foundation, 43.

Joshua Nkomo and charges of treason against the ex-ZIPRA. And so this could not be ignored, you know, and it became a big story.”⁵⁶⁶

“I do remember a couple of stories of tourists going missing. I mean one of them was more mystique where there was a certain part of Nyamandlovu region where people weren’t allowed to go to apparently. And these tourists went missing in that area. I do remember vaguely also about tourists being attacked by dissidents, which is why travelling in that area made us very afraid. In fact what people used to talk about is a lot of White Zimbabweans still see South Africa as something to look up to. Friends of mine used to have toys from South Africa. And these people use to travel in convoy when going to South Africa. So you always heard about people travelling in convoy through Matabeleland...And in fact what I think is a Zimbabwean National Army or the Defence Force, and they then basically escorted people through the border. And there was really ... *there was a whole publicity of how he had to protect ‘you’ against the ‘dissidents’ type of thing. So that was generally resonated with society at the time.*”⁵⁶⁷

Hence, from the above respondent one realises that the ZANU-PF propaganda machinery capitalised on these tourist killings by playing on the confidence and striking at two ‘sacred’ sentiments of the international community: its intense desire that the newly independent Zimbabwean nation taste of its full freedoms and that its interests (as the international community) in Zimbabwe not be threatened by security concerns.

Eventually, a number of persons were tried and sentenced for this crime, but only after the government launched a comprehensive man-hunt to trace those ‘responsible’ for the kidnapping and killing. Accordingly, it was reported that seven hundred (700) suspects were held in a interrogation centre set-up in the Tsholotsho district, seventy-seven (77) demobilised ZIPRA soldiers were arrested trying to collect their pay, and four hundred and fifty-two (452) supposed ‘dissidents’ were allegedly detained in Bulawayo over this time.⁵⁶⁸

“The bodies of the tourists were discovered several years later, in March 1985, not far from the point of abduction: they had been murdered within days of their disappearance. Very few civilians in Lupane, or elsewhere, could in fact have come into contact with the tourists. Two ex-ZIPRA men, Ngwenya and Mpofu, were later tried and found guilty of having been part of the group of five which abducted and then murdered the tourists. In 1986, the two were hanged for the

⁵⁶⁶ Interview: AM1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 10/08/06 – (White American Journalist who lived in Zimbabwe from 1980 until he was deported by the ZANU-PF government)

⁵⁶⁷ Interview: TM1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 01/11/07 – (Shona Businessman whose relative was a prominent leader in the ZANU-PF government).

⁵⁶⁸ Breaking the Silence, 1997: 43

crime. In January 1984 a man named Jeffrey Siwela, who was alleged to be part of the abduction group, was shot dead ‘while escaping from custody’ in Inyathi. The number of dissidents involved in the abduction was variously reported over the years as five, then eight, and then in January 1986, the gang had grown to 22. Press reports claimed that 18 of the 22 had by January 1986, been ‘killed in shoot-outs with the security forces’, while two others (Ngwenya and Mpofu) had been hanged for the crime, and two more were still at large.”⁵⁶⁹

However, certain counter-narratives in Matabeleland hold to the suspicion that this may have been the work of the Fifth Brigade (or some other branch of the security forces) in order to further ‘justify’ a heavy handed clamp-down on dissidence:

“You see, the story of the tourists came in tandem with the story of this other ‘terrorist’ who wanted to be arrested and who claimed that he was actually an ex-ZIPRA combatant, and who claimed that he was actually the one who took those tourists and he won’t release them until Nkomo and Mugabe come forward or something like that. But if you read the narrative from now backward, you can tell that this narrative again... the idea was to *implicate ZIPRA leadership* into sponsorship of the dissidents. And secondly, Zimbabwe had a very good image by then internationally, originally. And one of the issues which was happening by then; Mugabe wanted to justify by all means to the international community that what he was doing in Matabeleland was right. *If these people are now even taking the tourists, then the international community would be sympathetic to what he’s doing.* This is as far as I understand it, because I doubt really that dissidents could have taken them.”⁵⁷⁰

There is clear testimony and documented victim statements that describe recognizing the same Fifth Brigade soldiers by day acting as ‘dissidents’ by night both as a way to confuse the civilian population but also as a sophisticated dramaturgical strategy to construct an ‘enemy’ where one does not exist or is so weak that the current level of State-sanctioned violent repression is not justifiable.

“On the issue of dissidents Gogo Mantini (she actually did most the talking with son chipping in occasionally), said they had never seen the dissidents before the soldiers came to their area. Her thinking was that some of the soldiers often masqueraded as dissident[s] during the night. She wondered how the soldiers often knew details of dissidents’ movement (i.e. time, place, day, etc. when no one had reported their presence to them).”⁵⁷¹

⁵⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁰ Interview: SG1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 20/12/07 - (Ndebele Professor of Political Science, researcher and author).

⁵⁷¹ Grace to Heal Ministries - Recorded statement from primary victim of Gukurahundi violence, Mrs. MN & her son – 18/08/04 - Siyabalandela village, Donda Line, Tsholotsho.

Many informants would subscribe to this argument (security force by day/dissident by night) as a plausible explanation for how these tourists were abducted and killed and why there were public claims of responsibility issued by supposed ‘dissidents’ at that time. “Yes, yes. Who did it? And you know, we still...I personally still think that the evidence is strongly against CIO [Central Intelligence Officers], Civil intelligence, and the Fifth brigade rather than [dissidents]...”⁵⁷²

In *Act III* (Tourist Killings), the *plot* now thickened as ZANU-PF paraded the ZAPU-ZIPRA alliance as a destabilising force, not only to the people within the nation, but now the risk moved beyond Zimbabwe’s borders to include foreigners. Rural Matabeleland sparsely inhabited and mysterious in terrain, a landscape considered a ‘no-go zone’ to many became the isolated *stage* from which to enact this ritual ceremony of sacrificial political violence. The cast of *actors* remained anonymous, hidden behind masks of fleeting identities from lonesome, adventurous tourists, so-called dissidents to ordinary criminal thugs. The *props* were uncovered back stage where the shell of the burnt-out vehicle allegedly used by the kidnappers was discovered and the shallow graves unearthing the few remains of the tourists conveniently surfaced almost four years (1986) after the event, when their properties were basically unrecognisable. Raising the stakes to new heights, the ZANU-PF opened up the theatre to an international *audience*, the waiting donor community, and to any prying eyes of the world that cared to look upon this drama of carnage. The *script* was imbued with a universal text of violent barbarism where the ZAPU-ZIPRA alliance and their alleged campaign of dissidence now posed a terrorist threat to the international community at large.

Diagram 1 below outlines the dramaturgical flow of these ZANU-PF ‘stage-managed’ Acts (I - Entumbane, II – arms cache, III- tourist killings) using the frames of *plot*, *stage*, *actors*, *props*, *audience*, and *script*.

⁵⁷² Interview: JM1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 26/02/08 – (Shona Professor of Political Science in Zimbabwe).

Diagram 1: Dramaturgical flow of key Matabeleland events that shaped the ZANU-PF nationalist narrative 1980-1982.

Act:	Plot:	Stage:	Actors:	Props:	Audience:	Script:
Act I: Entumbane (1981)	ZANU-PF to solidify power by discrediting ZAPU as opposition	Assembly Points: close proximity in high density urban centres	Ex-ZIPRA and ZANLA soldiers and their military / political superiors	Stock-piled weapons that had not been handed in	Regional in Scope: Matabele Civilian Population and ZAPU opposition structures	ZAPU characterised as ‘poor losers’ bent on spoiling the ZANU-PF victory at the polls
Act II: Arms Caches (1982)	ZAPU now exposed as aggressor that can no longer be trusted	25 ZAPU-owned farms across the country	Political / military leaders on both sides of the conflict	Planted or confiscated weapons and ZAPU records	National in scope: Now included MaShona-land	ZAPU as ‘counter-revolutionary’ intending to overthrow ZANU-PF
Act III: Tourist Killings (1982)	Show ZAPU as destabilising force beyond its borders	Rural Matabeleland area: mysterious ‘no-go’ zone	White tourists / dissidents, criminals, ZANU-PF security forces?	Abandoned vehicle, shallow graves, and human remains	International in Scope: the outside world looking in – potential donors	Universal script: ZAPU pose threat to international community

5.5. Conclusion: ‘Worshipping at the alter of nationalism’⁵⁷³

“The oppression in the country now is more oppressive than it was under Smith. Because the oppression now goes down to the grass roots. It is a sin not to belong to the ruling party. Under Smith it was only the elites who were in danger from the government. Now it is everyone. The youths can go to a church on Sunday and force everyone to attend the Zanu rally outside. The party is more important than the church. You cannot predict what the rulers will want. One is reminded that, both in Shona and Sindebele, there are no words for ‘rival’ or ‘opposition’, only ‘enemy’. In Shona it is ‘mwenga’, in Sindebele: ‘isita’.”⁵⁷⁴

As the ZANU-PF garnered its energies to construct an ordering meta-narrative of nationalism, various key events (the clashes at Entumbane, the discovery of arms caches, and the tourist killings) whether strategically constructed or not, provided the forum and

⁵⁷³ Interview: SG1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 20/12/07 - (Ndebele Professor of Political Science, researcher and author).

⁵⁷⁴ Berkeley & Schrage, 1986: 115.

opportunity for an extrapolation of counter-narratives that had a disordering effect on the nation-building project as a whole. These *disordering* counter-narratives originated from at least three prominent sources: from ZAPU as an oppositional voice, from the ‘dissidents’ as a counter-revolutionary force, and from the civilians of Matabeleland who were beginning to feel the scourge of hate-speech and the tacit support of violent repression by the government. The *disordering* effect brought on by this series of counter-narratives coupled with the increasing state-sanctioned violence perpetrated against civilians gave rise to the cathartic rupture ‘necessary’ for the ZANU-PF meta-narrative of nationalism (composed of a powerful centralised government, one-party state, and leader veneration) to momentarily triumph through a presumed order over the narratives of resistance and dissent. The scripts representing dissonant texts were conspicuously deleted; erased from the discourse of possible alternative realities that could have potentially been more diverse and democratic in nature.

“...whereas it was proving that Robert Mugabe could tolerate only a unity of supplicants worshipping upwards to him at the pinnacle. As Rugare Gumbo said on his release with other Zanu ‘dissidents’ from the Zanu pits in Mozambique early in 1980, Mugabe was in fact ‘totally opposed to unity’, as he and his small clique felt that only they were entitled to rule Zimbabwe.”⁵⁷⁵

⁵⁷⁵ Todd, J. 2007: 200.

Chapter 6: Loyalty – Narratives of Exclusion and Inclusion

6.1. Introduction: The Contrived Other – An Illusive Enemy

“Children of Revolution Eating One Another.”⁵⁷⁶

Once the ZANU-PF felt satisfied that its nationalist text was established, it had to find a narrative that would produce a loyalty to its version of nationhood. The narrative script chosen was in no uncertain terms a polarizing frame that granted exclusive rights to the ruling ZANU-PF party to determine who was a dissident and who was a hero. These labels smacked of a strictly bounded, binary discourse that was imbued with the powerful mandate of deciding ‘who is in and who is out’ of the Zimbabwean national project. In his seminal work on the origins of nationhood, socio-psychologist Vamik Volkan builds a solid case for what appears to be a constant ebb and flow of relational construction that coalesces around the ‘*need for enemies and allies*’ and that this phenomena is foundational to the psyche of the modern state and its exercises in national identity formation and governance. Indeed, Volkan would surmise that the governments of powerful nation-states often create this need in order to secure a sense of group *inclusion* within their own borders and ‘other’ *exclusion* toward those outside their national parameters.⁵⁷⁷ While Volkan’s writing provides critical analysis for inter-personal and inter-state conflicts, the ZANU-PF was facing an even more complex dilemma of having inherited a national independence laced with the supposed ‘enemy’ emerging from within (intra-group conflict).

In order to maintain a sense of patriotic loyalty to the ZANU-PF nationalist narrative an ‘enemy’ threat had to be clearly defined, identified and articulated in the public domain. While the traces of race-based third-force enemy ideations were close at hand, the ZANU-PF now had the ominous challenge of transforming its Black liberation ‘comrades’ into the dreaded foe. *External* enemy formations that are clearly demarcated by race, class or geographical boundaries are much simpler to construct. However, the production of *internal* enemy formations where the insidious knife of hateful vengeance slices through those of the same race, creed or close geographical proximity embodies a

⁵⁷⁶ Quote by Mohamed Kellou, Algeria’s first ambassador to Zimbabwe in Todd, J. 2007. *Through the Darkness – A Life in Zimbabwe*. Cape Town: Zebra Press, 93.

⁵⁷⁷ Volkan, V. 1994. *The Need to have Enemies and Allies*. New Jersey and London: Jason Aronson Inc.

highly paradoxical, often compromising and troublesome plot. An internal implosion of a liberation movement like in Zimbabwe which was embalmed and decorated in revolutionary idealism is a blurred and messy ordeal. Even within the process of identifying and deciding on the labelling language of ‘dissident’ there were inherent tensions:

“The government then started taking a really hard line. You know, these are just ‘dissidents’ was the words used. They were dissidents, they weren’t terrorists, they [ZANU-PF] couldn’t use that word because that’s what they had been called by the Rhodesian government. They were dissidents; they were those [who] questioned the authority of the central government. And they did so violently, and the government was going to stamp them out. There was never any question of negotiating, of discussing, of reaching a compromise. No, they were dissidents, they were violent dissidents and they were going to be stamped out ruthlessly.”⁵⁷⁸

In this transcript one finds a sense of ambiguity surrounding the identifying labels of ‘dissident’ verses ‘terrorist’. ZANU-PF dared not use the label ‘terrorist’ as that would have drawn attention to the similarity of their revolutionary cause against the Rhodesian government and the cause of the resistance movement that was fomenting from within in their own borders. So, they chose to use another term - ‘dissident’ - to identify someone who questioned the central government. Herein lay the critical contradiction, that being that both the ZANU pre-independence liberation struggle and the ZAPU post independence oppositional stance were founded on the basis of a radical ‘questioning’ of the central government at that time (albeit one was a white minority-led and the other a black majority-led government).

Manufacturing an ‘insider-enemy’ within the bowels of a particular collective configuration is a disturbing and diabolical undertaking. It involves deconstructing a vital trust and weaving a fatal web of deceitful machinations through an arsenal of socio-political manipulation. In his incisive critique of the violent regime of the Chilean Dictator Augusto Pinochet, Catholic Theologian William Cavanaugh juxtapositions the ceremonial acts of state-sanctioned Torture and the religious sacrament of the Eucharist

⁵⁷⁸ Interview: AM1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 10/08/06 – (White American Journalist who lived in Zimbabwe from 1980 until he was deported by the ZANU-PF government).

as *rituals of enemy-formation* and *enemy-transformation*⁵⁷⁹ respectively. On torture, Cavanaugh writes:

“A related effect of torture on the collective imagination in Chile was to produce enemies for the regime. [Torture & disappearance]...simulated the atmosphere of war that the regime needed to justify its policies. Violence was used not merely as a response to threats to the state, but rather to create the threats from which the state offered itself as protector. At issue was not ‘repression’ as such, since there was little to repress, but rather production of enemies and the scripting of people into a drama of fear.”⁵⁸⁰

This quoted passage could have easily been lifted out of the scenario of Chile in the 1970s and placed in the context of Matabeleland, Zimbabwe in the 1980s. Acts of terror and severe violence perpetrated by the ZANU-PF and its security apparatus became the staged performance that incited the vociferous enemies that the oppressive system needed in order to justify their own existence, rule and brutality. Even more spurious, this state-sanctioned violence provided the necessary facade to cast themselves (ZANU-PF) in the role of ‘protector’ of the people. In Cavanaugh’s own words:

“Torture is part of the theatre of fear...Torture also helps to create the enemies that we need. Torture is a kind of theatre in which people are made to play roles, and thereby reinforce a certain kind of social imagination...the prisoners become what terrorists are in our imagination: depraved subhumans. The imagination of the War on Terror is inscribed on their bodies in a kind of ritual drama, or anti-liturgy.”⁵⁸¹

Cavanaugh is particularly interested in interrogating the *imagination* of the State and how this destructive imagination is acted out on the bodies of the very people the State is supposed to serve and protect.

“Torture is the ritual enactment of the imagination of the state on the body of the individual person. The effects of torture go far beyond the body of the tortured individual. Torture is a social, one might say ‘liturgical’, enactment of the imaginative power of the state. Torture is both a product of – and helps reinforce

⁵⁷⁹ Cavanaugh’s treatment of enemy transformation compliments the conceptions of the ethic of ‘enemy-love’ which was promulgated by the late Martin Luther King, Jr. in his theoretical and practical formulations on non-violence in the US civil rights movement of the 1960s.

⁵⁸⁰ Cavanaugh, W. 2006. “The Sacrifice of Love – The Eucharist as Resistance to Terror and Torture”. *A Lecture presented at O’Shea Centre, Wilston*. Melbourne: Catholic Communications, 10. See also Cavanaugh, W. 1998. *Torture and Eucharist: Theology, Politics and the Body of Christ*. New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell Publishers.

⁵⁸¹ Cavanaugh, W. 2006: 11.

– a certain story about who ‘we’ are and who ‘our’ enemies are. Torture can imagine the world as divided...”⁵⁸²

In agreement with Volkan, Cavanaugh suggests that this ‘need’ of groups or nation-states to continually organize themselves around the postures of ‘*exclusion and embrace*’⁵⁸³ in relation to the ‘other’ is necessary in order to ‘demonise’ another and thereby justify acts of aggression that will in turn spawn the enemies required to continue propagating a systematic cycle of violence.

“Wars are about the imaginary dividing of the world into friends and enemies. And enemies must exist in sufficient abundance and sufficient monstrosity if a war is to be sustained...The Global War on Terror would not exist without such de-humanisation. In other words, this war is not simply about *response* but *production*...Torture is this drama of friend and enemy brought to its most heightened realisation.”⁵⁸⁴

This myopic cycle of ‘violence and enemy-creation’ became the *modus operandi* of the ZANU-PF starting at independence in 1980 and has remained its strategy in order to stay in power even to the present.

6.1.1. Inventing the Enemy

From its inception, the ZANU-PF government has continuously *invented* and *re-invented* its ‘enemies’ through ever evolving political narratives that mirror classic theories of enemy-formation and the rhetoric of categorical thinking (us/them mind-sets) in relation to any threats to political power. First, as was discussed in Chapter Four, the ZANU-PF utilized an ethnic-hatred conflict narrative to justify the Gukurahundi violence: “We the Shona (us) are killing the Ndebele (them) in revenge for the stealing of our cattle, wives and children by King Mzilikazi and King Lobengula in the 1800s”. This narrative was meant to mask ZANU-PF’s determination to wipe-out the opposition, or as some would maintain to commit genocide against the Ndebele people which at that time were represented by ZAPU. Second, as indicated in Chapter Five, as it rushed to solidify its nationalist agenda, the ZANU-PF used a populist politically-leftist narrative against all opposition parties that defied the ruling regime: “We are the legitimate, popular people’s

⁵⁸² Cavanaugh, W. 2006: 7.

⁵⁸³ This phrase is borrowed from the seminal work of theologian and philosopher, Volf, M. 1996. *Exclusion & Embrace – A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.

⁵⁸⁴ Cavanaugh, W. 2006: 12.

government (us) dealing with the puppets of the Capitalist West (them)”. This veiled narrative threat gave cover to the ZANU-PF's determination to maintain a one-party state.

“When they dealt with the Opposition political party, the MDC, they said, “We are nationals, Black Zimbabweans, fighting neo-colonialism”, when in actual fact it’s ZANU- PF that was trying to fight Opposition political party. So you can see how the *language* is used. Now there is a sense in which, critically important, there is an *ideology* behind it that is very critical.”⁵⁸⁵

Third, when it came to the fast-track land reform programme of the year 2000, ZANU-PF revitalised a political liberationist ideological narrative: “We, the Black-consciousness revolutionaries are the genuine Africans (us) who are now taking back our rightful land stolen by the White colonizers (them)”. This disguised narrative gave license to ZANU-PF's corrupt policy of parcelling out farms among a small group of government elites who supported Mugabe in power; a petit bourgeoisie benefiting from the wealth of the Land.

“Let’s come to a current or to current examples; when they, ZANU-PF, took land, grabbed the land, they said to everybody, ‘we are bona fide Zimbabweans, the land belongs to us. And we need to take it away from the colonialists’. But if you look at the people who benefitted from the land, you will be very surprised that there is a core group that belongs to ZANU-PF who benefitted, and they ended up with multiplicities of farms, but no opposition got farms. Even those that were in Opposition political parties, lost their land. And that’s critical for you to realize...so it’s the *language* that is used.”⁵⁸⁶

Fourth, and more recently in 2005, ZANU-PF embarked on what it termed Operation Murambatsvina (translated as ‘clean out the rubbish’ or ‘take out the trash’) in which an estimated 700,000 urban poor had their informal housing and businesses demolished and were forcibly relocated into rural areas in the middle of the winter months. Here ZANU-PF employed a legal, even moral legitimacy narrative, claiming that this drastic action was necessary as these urban dwellers were squatting and trading illegally on municipal land and that many were illegal aliens and were a criminal menace in these urban communities; “We decent, law-abiding, patriotic Zimbabwean citizens (us) have to get rid of ‘foreigners’ and criminal thugs (them) who have come from outside”. Once again,

⁵⁸⁵ Interview: RM2, Johannesburg, South Africa - 26/02/08 – (Shona NGO peace activist advocating for trauma healing and reconciliation among rural Matabeleland communities and survivors of Gukurahundi violence).

⁵⁸⁶ Ibid.

ZANU-PF used an ‘enemy’ discourse to hide its clandestine efforts to directly disenfranchise the urban poor who were known to have voted in large numbers for the opposition in the presidential elections of that same year.⁵⁸⁷

“The ideology that has been spread to a core group, that almost look at themselves as the [only people] who should be preserved, protected, benefit, and be privileged. But it’s important to always create ways and means of how to distract people from that, and yet the core group benefits from that... So they built the *language* around it. And therefore it’s without doubt that the *language* has become very much part and parcel of a weapon and a system to disenfranchise people, not only of their citizenship, but of their self-worth and belonging.”⁵⁸⁸

Each of the four narrative scripts reconstructed and recited above were officially articulated by top national politicians, published in the state-run media and channelled through the government information networks of the ruling ZANU-PF party both locally and abroad. The rigorous debate that swirled around the legitimacy of these narratives among the political ‘intelligencia’ and exiled communities gave public affirmation to the strength of these ZANU-PF imposed meta-narratives. However, most of the rural masses in Zimbabwe have had no access to any other alternative sources of news media and as such, found themselves unknowingly entrapped in the twisted web of ZANU-PF propaganda.

“[A]s a journalist [I] faced that because if we used any other term besides ‘dissident’, they [ZANU-PF] would question that. And journalist[s] were called in. I was told to watch my reporting, during that time. As a journalist for The Guardian before Nick Wall was thrown out of the country for his reports on the Matabeleland massacres, then ‘I’ started writing for the Guardian, and I was called in and warned saying ‘these figures that you are reporting are not true, and you better watch it. This is a formal warning and one more formal warning and then you’re out.’ So the government took exception to any other...even for the foreign media to report it in their own terms. And we got sucked in and you know I had to consciously say ‘no, I can’t call them ‘dissidents’ that is accepting the vocabulary of the government. I had to call them ‘armed rebels’ or ‘violent protesters’, ‘guerrilla groups’ or ‘armed bands’. There were lots of different

⁵⁸⁷ See Solidarity Peace Trust. 2005. “Crime of Poverty”: Murambatsvina Part II incorporating “Hide and Seek”: An account of finding the forcibly displaced in rural Matabeleland, July – September 2005; and Shale, V. 2006. “Operation Murambatsvina: The Dynamics and Escalation of Zimbabwean Intra-state Conflict”. *African Journal on Conflict Resolution*, 6 (2): 107-125.

⁵⁸⁸ Interview: RM2, Johannesburg, South Africa - 26/02/08 – (Shona NGO peace activist advocating for trauma healing and reconciliation among rural Matabeleland communities and survivors of Gukurahundi violence).

things but I tried not to accept the government's vocabulary for that because that's what they 'wanted', you see."⁵⁸⁹

6.1.2. Performance Violence: Rank Discontent among the Freedom Fighters

Before delving into the particularities of the hero / dissident narratives that dominated Zimbabwe in the early 1980s, it is important to take note of the context of widespread discontent that characterised the early period of political transition to independence. The participatory space that was opened up along the pathway to increased political freedom in Zimbabwe sourced a breeding ground for silenced voices to emerge in protest and for subjugated narratives to be publically displayed in dramaturgical expressions, including performance violence. The performance violence enacted by ex-ZIPRA contingents is given descriptive aptitude by a veteran journalist interviewed in this research:

"The way they acted, I mean it was, I think a kind of desperation. They deserted, generally they deserted from the army and they went off with a bit of arms, and they were angry and they were trying to protest. However there was a method to their madness. You know it started with the armed robberies, *they realized they weren't getting the kind of publicity they needed with that, then there was a decision made 'let's go for some tourists, we're going to get big news out of that', and boy [!] did they.* There was also a strategic decision to go after white farmers. Again, they could kill twenty black Ndebele civilian or twenty Shona, it wouldn't get big news. You know the government could play it down: you kill three white farmers; boom [!] it's in the headlines; it's in the international headlines. I mean it was a very cynical view, but I have to say as a journalist, they were right. I mean and I didn't like that situation, I often tried to say 'look at how many black Zimbabweans are dying'. But it was always the white farmers that got big headlines... the dissidents, the actual violent rebels, they did have a strategy. I don't think it was...it wasn't a strategy to overthrow the government; *it was a strategy to create the most havoc and the most news.* It was a bloody...to get as much attention as possible to get the government to negotiate with Joshua Nkomo to get, I'd say, the best."⁵⁹⁰

It is interesting to note that the designation of 'dissident' was not reserved for the ex-ZIPRA guerrillas. In its genesis, the dissident label referred to all or any unruly elements (both ex-ZIPRA and ex-ZANLA) not complying with the demobilisation process.

⁵⁸⁹ Interview: AM1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 10/08/06 – (White American Journalist who lived in Zimbabwe from 1980 until he was deported by the ZANU-PF government).

⁵⁹⁰ Interview: AM1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 10/08/06 – (White American Journalist who lived in Zimbabwe from 1980 until he was deported by the ZANU-PF government).

“Joshua Nkomo was initially Home Affairs Minister after 1980. And you had those extraordinary scenes...*where ex-ZANLA guerrillas were attacking Police stations and the word ‘dissident’ was being used in relation to them* and the people in Matabeleland. And it was because Joshua had been put in charge of Home Affairs, the police were thought of as a legitimate object to attack... I had very, very interesting background stuff to the whole environment out of which Gukurahundi arose. And this fact which nobody now would think of, that *the word dissident was invented to deal with that disobedient [element] all over the country*. And in fact Nkomo used the well-armed ex-ZIPRA soldiers to deal with dissidents in Matabeleland during this period. And he was complaining that nobody is trying to deal with the dissident ZANLA attacking the police stations.”⁵⁹¹

Specific incidents of *ex-ZANLA* dissidence have been identified during the early years after independence, such as indicated in the following interview account:

“It became restricted to Western Zimbabwe but it was in 1980 it had certainly been more widespread. I was not then researching in Matabeleland, I was researching in the perimeters and in Makoni District one heard echoes of the fighting between the army units in Bulawayo and so on. But also in Makoni District one heard about dissidents. *There had been dissident ZANU guerrillas who refused to lay down their arms and who were attacking churches and so on* and government helicopters dropping leaflets saying ‘Go to church’ in Makoni District. And indeed one of the earliest murders there were missionary murders. Two white missionaries, I’ve forgotten their denomination, but they were certainly Protestant, were murdered in Makoni District just before I got there to do research.”⁵⁹²

In sum, testimonial evidence points to a considerable amount of unrest among the former freedom fighter populations on all sides of the equation (both ZIPRA, ZANLA and other rogue cadres) which in turn begs the question as to why the dissident label was later restricted to the combatants of only *one* liberation army (ZIPRA) and its civilian constituency (Ndebele) located in a particular geographical area (Matabeleland and Midlands).

6.1.3. The ‘Dissident’ Reality: Form and Scope

The ‘dissident’ reality in Matabeleland is contested ground. From the interviews conducted in this study and the published research on the matter, the numbers of actual

⁵⁹¹ Interview: TR1, Oxford, UK – 21/10/08 – (White British professor, researcher and widely published author who is a leading authority on the history of Zimbabwe).

⁵⁹² Ibid.

‘dissidents’ ranges from 40-50 on the low end of the scale and up to 400-800 on the high end of the scale.⁵⁹³

“The numbers of dissidents were probably no more than 400 at their zenith. Their attrition rate was very high, with approximately 75% being killed, captured, injured or fleeing to Botswana. At their peak, dissident numbers in Matabeleland South were about 200, but by the amnesty they were reduced to 54. In Matabeleland North, dissidents numbered about 90 at most, but again, by the Amnesty, only 41 remained. In western Matabeleland, dissidents numbered 90 at their peak, and about 27 at the Amnesty. Ultimately, only 122 dissidents would turn themselves in, countrywide.”⁵⁹⁴

Regardless of the disparity in the numerical count of dissidents, two critical issues related to the perceptions of how many dissidents actually existed are worthy to be highlighted in this section. Firstly, there are discrepancies around the expansive geographical *scope* of their supposed activities in light of their numbers:

“Dissidents had the ultimate counting, in a number, a great number...certainly maybe a hundred, even less than that. *And yet we had a whole picture given that they were here and there and everywhere.* It was the operation of a few, so we hear...It was a maverick band of bandits as we gathered, who hit and ran guerrilla warfare, which they had been taught to topple the previous regime... but it didn’t really take all that long, it didn’t last.”⁵⁹⁵

“But if you get scales at which dissidents were operating, you really would wonder that how can one walk...even if you are an athlete, you really cannot cross from Matabeleland-South... if today you have abducted or you have killed someone at one point down in Matabeleland-South in a rural part of Matabeleland. And tomorrow we are told that you were seen right North of Midlands. And at that time the transport route...the movement of buses and cars had become so restricted, such that these dissidents are mainly dependent on walking. *So it wouldn’t make sense to see one walking about five hundred kilometres in 24 hours.*”⁵⁹⁶

Secondly, there is considerable argument for the law of *proportionality* when considering the number of dissidents as compared to the number of the Fifth Brigade forces

⁵⁹³ In this research sample, two respondents (AM1 & SM1) indicated the total figure of 40-50, one (DN3) placed the total between the figures of 150-200. In her extensive research on dissidents, Dr. Jocelyn Alexander estimates a total number of 400 and the official ZANU-PF tally published in the state-run *Chronicle* Newspaper (Bulawayo) placed the total at an inflated rate of 800.

⁵⁹⁴ CCJP and LRF. 1997. *Breaking the Silence, Building True Peace – A Report on the Disturbances in Matabeleland and the Midlands 1980-1988*. Zimbabwe: Published by CCJP and LRF, 37.

⁵⁹⁵ Interview: DN2, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 30/03/07- (Ndebele retired journalist and one of the editors for the state-run newspaper the *Chronicle* during the 1980s).

⁵⁹⁶ Interview: SM1, Durban, South Africa – 07/03/07 – (Ndebele teacher, researcher and university lecturer).

commissioned to deal with them, and the toll of civilian casualties that resulted from the severe violence unleashed at that time. Speaking of the dissident numbers in comparison to the force of the Fifth Brigade, the following respondents (a human rights lawyer and veteran journalist) ask the hard questions of proportionality with considerable clarity:

“A hand full, literally no more than a handful. A tiny number [of dissidents], completely..., you know, the response was completely disproportionate to the threat. There are lots of hard facts, e.g. when the amnesty was finally declared in 1988, I think only about 120 dissidents handed themselves in. Now some had been killed and some had been captured. But if there were 200 dissidents, 300 maximum...even 400 dissidents, *you kill 20,000 people for 400?*”⁵⁹⁷

“...I mean we didn’t know how many, was it a few hundred, was it a few thousand, but I mean, over that period from 1982 when their protest started, until 1987, you look at how many they...they ‘were’ violent. It started with the armed robberies of the buses, it then went on to the kidnapping of the foreign tourists, it also was the killing of White farmers, and they were quite a few that were killed, I forget how many. And then there was also at the very end of 1987, there were the beheadings of White...religious group that was farming near the Matapos pass, and I think it was 15 White farmers and their children who were beheaded. I mean it was pretty gruesome. So, I mean, they ‘were’ violent, there was no question about that. But, as it turns out, it was a very small group...I forget exactly how many but it was a small group and I saw some of them turn themselves in. And I mean they had been living rough, they had been sleeping rough, they had been on the run for years, they were a tough group, they’ve been murdering...tough, tough, tough, *but this was a small group. You know, was it necessary to kill 20 thousand people, you know, 20 thousand civilians?*”⁵⁹⁸

These transcriptions lend weight to the expressed concern that the *means* (the severe violence of the Fifth Brigade) utilised by the ZANU-PF did not justify the *ends* (defeating the dissidents). On the basis of a legal argument of proportionality, the ZANU-PF remains hard-pressed to explain why a specially trained army Brigade of 5,000 soldiers was required to ‘weed-out’ at the most 400 dissidents, and in the end 20,000 civilians were killed⁵⁹⁹. For the ordinary person on the streets of Matabeleland (many of whom experienced the trauma of a losing loved ones through violence or disappearances), the

⁵⁹⁷ Interview: DC1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe - 13/09/07 (White Zimbabwean Human Rights Lawyer and politician).

⁵⁹⁸ Interview: AM1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 10/08/06 – (White American Journalist who lived in Zimbabwe from 1980 until he was deported by the ZANU-PF government).

⁵⁹⁹ Respondent (FN1) claimed that the civilian death toll in Matabeleland could be as high as 200,000 people. However, there is no actual evidence to back-up this inflated numerical claim. Interview: FN1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 26/10/07 – (Ndebele Finance Manager and former employee of the ZANU-PF Ministry of Finance and the National Oil Company of Zimbabwe in the early 1980s).

motivations for these mass killings remain precariously suspect. This discussion will be given more detailed attention in the concluding section of this Chapter.

6.2. Explanations of Dissidence

There are myriad explanations for the ‘dissident’ movement in Matabeleland in the 1980s. The official government statements continually touted the line of a national security threat wherein the ZAPU-ZIPRA alliance was attempting to ‘topple’ the ZANU-PF regime. In a radio address delivered on 10 November 1980 after the first Entumbane clashes, Prime Minister Robert Mugabe spoke these words to the nation:

“The government will preserve law and order against disloyal, misguided and politically motivated armed hooligans and political malcontents whose final objective, according to the information before me, is to create chaos and lawlessness so as to pave the way for the eventual fall of my government.”⁶⁰⁰

Yet the actual gradation of cascading motivations and interests articulated by these marauding bands of ‘dissidents’ was characteristically diverse. There were the politically marginalised soldiers, the ZANU-PF security forces parading as ‘dissidents’, the third-force Super-ZAPU squads supported by South African Apartheid government⁶⁰¹, and the opportunistic criminal thugs and their ever-present gangs. The following respondent gives his summary of the variation of explanations for why the dissidents existed:

“...obviously those that had been the ZIPRA guys or soldiers who had been disgruntled were ready to take arms and then they were viewed as dissidents. But you see in order to carry out ethnic cleansing, government pretended as if there were other dissidents who were its own creation so as to justify. I mean for example, if one was a Fifth Brigade during the day, he would come at night and pretend to be a dissident. And therefore government would say there are dissidents even though they were dissidents of their own creation. They were dissidents who were created by ZANU-PF. So that then it could justify the killing of Ndebeles because they were there. But there were also dissidents who were disgruntled by the way they were treated, you see, by the government of Zimbabwe who then said we are going to take up arms and fight the system. But whatever ways the dissidents were, you see, government justified their presence to carry out this ethnic cleansing.”⁶⁰²

⁶⁰⁰ Yap, K. 2001. *Uprooting the Weeds – Power, Ethnicity and Violence in the Matabeleland Conflict 1980-1987*. Stockholm: Elanders Novum, 135.

⁶⁰¹ Martin, D. & Johnson, P. 1986. *Destructive Engagement: Southern Africa at War*. Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House for the Southern African Research and Documentation Centre.

⁶⁰² Interview: FN1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 26/10/07 – (Ndebele Finance Manager and former employee of the ZANU-PF Ministry of Finance and the National Oil Company of Zimbabwe in the early 1980s).

Sifting through the research testimonies of ‘dissidents’ (ex-ZIPRA combatants), one is struck by the glaring gap in evidence of any clear and orderly plan to overthrow the Mugabe government.⁶⁰³ Most recorded statements of ex-ZIPRA soldiers who left the demobilization camps and went back to the bush armed, claimed they did so because of the threats (sometimes veiled in ethnic overtones) of death, violence, torture and abuse coming from ex-ZANLA and ZNA (Zimbabwe National Army) forces whom they were sharing camps with or who were participating in the oversight of the demobilisation campaign. Consider the reflections of these ex-ZIPRA fighters:

“On several occasions I was arrested, suspected of being a dissident; I was arrested, detained for some months, sometimes for weeks, sometimes for days, beaten up and things like that. Just because I was a former combatant and I belonged to the other party. So most of the combatants were actually suspect...I was picked up, detained and tortured.”⁶⁰⁴

“Because anyone could just arrive at your doorstep, whether a soldier, a policeman, or the CIO [Central Intelligence Officer]. Especially the CIO, wanting to find out what you were doing there, at home. ‘No, I have filled out my demob[ilisation] papers’, and you would bring them out to show them. Since you were a demobilised ZIPRA ex-combatant, they would immediately find you guilty and level you as a dissident.”⁶⁰⁵

In reviewing ex-ZIPRA (‘dissident’) transcriptions, phrases such as ‘feeling unsafe’, ‘under threat’ and ‘fear of disappearance’ were prevalent which would indicate that the dissidence in question may have been driven out of fear and deep-seated insecurity more than out of traitorous mutiny.

“Our main reason to be in the bush was to defend ourselves, more than even defending ZAPU itself. We wanted to defend ourselves personally. We were threatened, our lives were threatened. If we did not do this [become dissidents], we did not think we would survive.”⁶⁰⁶

In their respected research on ‘dissidence’, Alexander, McGregor and Ranger articulate a strong case for viewing the dissidence in Matabeleland as a *defensive* not an

⁶⁰³ Alexander, J., McGregor, J., & Ranger, T. 2000. *Violence & Memory – One Hundred Years in the ‘Dark Forests’ of Matabeleland*. Oxford: James Curry, 192.

⁶⁰⁴ Bhebe, N. & Ranger, T. (eds). 1995. *Soldiers in Zimbabwe’s Liberation War*. London: James Curry, 20.

⁶⁰⁵ Yap, K. 2001: 139. Taken from: Zimbabwe Project. 1993. *Called Down Home (video)*. Harare: Zimbabwe Project with Oxfam (UK) and Novib (Netherlands).

⁶⁰⁶ Yap, K. 2001: 190.

offensive movement.⁶⁰⁷ As opposed to the official ZANU-PF narrative of a looming, well-planned *coup d'état* arising out of Matabeleland, there are at least four other major explanations for dissidence that have surfaced in recent research around this issue. First, there was a self-proclaimed contingent of ex-ZIPRA soldiers who were unwilling to accept the defeat of ZAPU in the 1980 election polls, claiming that ZANU either rigged the vote or intimidated the masses on a large scale and which unashamedly re-armed themselves to 'continue' the struggle. However, as has already been highlighted, there is no concise documentation to prove that this continued struggle had the approval of the top ZAPU leadership or that it was strategically well-orchestrated and as such it appears that this small group of ex-combatants was more concerned with a provocative display of performance violence (as a means of gaining necessary attention) rather than an actual scheme of government overthrow. In any case, it was these public and often symbolic acts of violence and sabotage undertaken by this small band of renegades that the ZANU-PF clung to in order to motivate their deluge of state-sanctioned force.

“As far as I’m concerned yes, dissidents were there. A very small portion of people must have been turned dissident. Because I’m of the opinion that these guys, they must have been really frustrated in the Army...But the majority as far as I’m concerned, it was purely created, by ZANU-PF, that’s my opinion, and I might be wrong but that’s my *honest* opinion.”⁶⁰⁸

Second, there were ‘dissident voices’ that emerged in response to what they perceived to be the unfair or unequal treatment at the hands of the ZANU-PF government structures and their forcible attempts to consolidate power (especially in the process of demobilization and integration into the army). Third, others place the blame for dissidence on the third force activity of the South African Apartheid government which was strategically exploiting the Matabeleland conflict to meet their own interests and political gain. The motive was to prove that ‘black-on-black’ violence was inevitable under the newly elected black African leadership and therefore Zimbabwe was ungovernable. Fourth, there is a growing body of research that is gaining support suggesting that the ‘dissident’ insurgency was created, constructed by the violent activities of the Fifth Brigade and the Zimbabwean National Army (ZNA) in particular,

⁶⁰⁷ Alexander, J., McGregor, J., & Ranger, T. 2000: 180.

⁶⁰⁸ Interview: AN1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 12/09/07 – (Ndebele Church leader and Peace activist).

in collaboration with the other security branches of the ZANU-PF government in general.⁶⁰⁹ These various dissidence trajectories will be further discussed on in the next four sections.

6.2.1. Disgruntled Ex-ZIPRA Soldiers

This explanation claims that the dissidents consisted of a small contingent of ex-ZIPRA soldiers who did take exception to the electoral victory of ZANU-PF and on principle determined in their minds to stage some form of ‘legitimate’ resistance action. They chose violence as their channel for legitimate protest, this being the familiar, internalised mind-set imprinted on their psyche throughout the liberation war. This dissident sub-group consisted of what could be termed the ‘intelligentsia’ soldiers who readily and thoughtfully articulated their ideological choice to continue an armed struggle on the basis of moral and ethical grounds. This resistance expression was the most publicised, well-known and documented of the various sub-groups of dissonance being discussed here. The first key to their argument was their unwavering loyalty (literally unto death) to their leader Dr. Joshua Nkomo. In the revolutionary worldview the liberation leader is placed upon a pedestal that entitles him to be the only protagonist to lead the movement and the nation that is being fought for. The revolutionary leader embodies vision, courage, the character of command and the function of establishing and maintaining order that is considered vital to the sustenance of the movement.

“I found among the former ZIPRAs, there were some who accepted the new dispensation, the war is over [and] the Patriotic Front has won. But there were some who were actually saying ‘If Nkomo loses, then that means we’ve lost’. And those, I think they were the first group of dissidents. And bearing in mind is that some of the ex-combatants were not very educated people, to be honest. And if you tell them that ZAPU has lost and Joshua Nkomo is no longer going to run this country, a lot of them they were gripped by fear; ‘What will happen?’ And a lot of them then decided on their own volition without anybody leading from above, to actually say ‘No, let’s go back to our Operational areas and tell the people that the war is beginning’. And there were a lot of them, I think they were very optimistic that the ZAPU leadership was going to support what they were doing.”⁶¹⁰

⁶⁰⁹ Alexander, et al., 2000: 180.

⁶¹⁰ Interview: SG1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 20/12/07 - (Ndebele Professor of Political Science, researcher and author now based out of an international university in the UK).

However, beyond the pull of leader adulation, this group of rebels fell victim to the unrealistic promises of revolutionary rhetoric. Under the guise of motivational reward for the soldiers fighting in the trenches, the ZIPRA commanders continually drilled into the minds of these subordinates that they were not only fighting to liberate the masses, but that there was a great deal of material (houses, jobs) and social recognition (political clout) awaiting them upon independence. These nebulous rewards failed to materialise fast enough after 1980.

“I think the issue is connected to the historical precedence. The ZIPRA combatants operated there and they were all Ndebele-speaking. So, when Nkomo lost the Election the people of Matabeleland felt like they lost as well. So I remember the first time there were actually dissidents, or they were claiming to be dissidents, they actually told their parents that ‘No, we lost, the war is beginning’. This is how they put it because they were trying to say you must be prepared to actually continue to give food because we lost and the war is beginning. And I remember three people who came in 1981, they passed by and went there, and when they talked to my father they were saying ‘You know, old man, you know what happened in 1980, and we are also the former ZIPRA and the war is continuing’”.⁶¹¹

Lastly, this contingent of dissidents did not see the realisation of the capstone of their ideological battle, that being the generous redistribution of land to them and their families. Of particular significance was the ZAPU-ZIPRA schema of buying up land to facilitate the ‘working of the land by Africans’ through co-operative farming projects.⁶¹²

6.2.2. Resistance to the Power Hegemony of ZANU-PF

Contrary to the disgruntled ex-ZIPRA ‘intelligencia-soldiers’, this explanation would describe the dissidents as a cadre of disappointed fighters who did not chose the conduit of violence as their channelled expression of frustration. Instead they chose the way of least resistance, that being withdrawal from participation in the very structures they had diligently fought for. This cluster of dissident soldiers disengaged from the socio-political institutions of independence early on when it became evident that they were going to be disenfranchised from their dream of a better, more equitable society.

⁶¹¹ Ibid.

⁶¹² Todd, J. 2007: 19-27. This memoir gives a highly personal but well-documented account of the relative success and failure of this farming coop endeavour through the organization of the Zimbabwe Project Trust (ZPT).

“But also, the government, they kept a consistent narrative with the dissidents. As I say, they had nothing to discuss, no compromise, these were violent dissidents, rebels and they had to be stamped out. And anybody that was associated with them had to be stamped out as violently as the dissidents, or even more so. Because they couldn’t catch the dissidents but they could catch the people who had served them dinner the night before. And the way to deal with them is to shoot them... Part of it also, okay ‘power’, ZANU-PF was going to be unchallenged within Zimbabwe, and also I think there was a message going out to the people of Matabeleland, to the Ndebele people saying, ‘Don’t mess with us’, you know ‘*ZANU-PF, we Shona are ruling, and don’t mess with us*’. ‘*Get used to it and don’t question things because we can make life difficult for you and no-one’s gonna do anything about it.*”⁶¹³

This ex-ZIPRA faction identified what appeared to be a systematic marginalisation by the ZANU-PF and quickly abandoned all hopes of thriving in an equal, power-sharing arrangement in Zimbabwe. There is ample testimony that they were being blocked from holding political office, discouraged from employment opportunities, overlooked and disrespected in leadership promotion and downright threatened if they attempted to occupy space in the security structures of the new ZANU-PF regime.

“But this disgruntlement came from the system of ‘demobilization’. The people that I remember well that were demobilized, I used to see most of ZIPRA people who were demobilized from the Army. And in any case, to look at statistics, ZIPRA just like ZANLA, they had educated military personnel, but ZIPRA had the greatest number of educated personnel because most of them had been trained in Russia. They were aircraft engineers and the like, *but when it came to the joining of the Armies immediately after Independence, all the people from the ZIPRA, they were not given leadership positions.* And rather, where one was, you would be given a ZANLA personnel to understudy you, and those people were demobilized and all the ZANLA military personnel took up all those leadership posts. And one of the issues was immediately after Independence, the government sent a lot of military people into China to learn some skills that were needed. And of all those that were sent out, they were all from ZANLA, and that disgruntled the ZIPRA personnel.”⁶¹⁴

6.2.3. Third-Force Elements

A third explanation for the formation of dissidents points to those third-force elements that capitalised on the chaotic cloud of violence overshadowing Matabeleland in

⁶¹³ Interview: AM1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 10/08/06 – (White American Journalist who lived in Zimbabwe from 1980 until he was deported by the ZANU-PF government).

⁶¹⁴ Interview: SM1, Durban, South Africa – 07/03/07 – (Ndebele teacher, researcher and university lecturer).

the form of South African backed insurgents (Super-ZAPU) and collections of criminal vagabonds. These assemblies of bandits and thugs served to further confuse the Matabeleland masses and thwart any logical sensibilities of the other 'dissident' companies and their movements. The Super-ZAPU were a small unit of fighters allegedly made up of exiled ZIPRA members who initially crossed the borders into neighbouring states (Botswana and South Africa) in fear for their lives after ZANU-PF came to power. These recruits were then trained by the South African Apartheid secret services with the mandate to make Zimbabwe ungovernable.⁶¹⁵

“Super ZAPU was the group of South African backed dissidents, which operated in Southern Matabeleland from late 1982 until mid-1984. Super ZAPU consisted of probably fewer than 100 members who were actually actively deployed in Zimbabwe. They were largely recruited from the refugee camps and led by ex-ZIPRA members who had been retrained in South Africa, in the covert operation known as Operation Drama.”⁶¹⁶

Dragon Mabuza, a former Super-ZAPU dissident, described his experience as follows:

“Once we were in South Africa I found myself at eh Entambeni camp [Louis Tritchardt], and we did not get any money... We received four months' military training at Entambeni before we deployed back into Zimbabwe. We had both black and white officers training us in English, Shona and Ndebele... Captain Calloway told us to take up arms because the country [Zimbabwe] was not yet free and needed to be liberated... He told us that even if we came across whites, especially farmers, these are bad people because they grow the food which feeds Mugabe's dogs. He [Calloway] told us he had instructions from Nkomo and that he himself was a commander appointed by Nkomo... As initiation we were made to cut off the hands of two [ZNA] soldiers... We made one armed robbery and killed eight people.”⁶¹⁷

Super-ZAPU employed a tactic of infiltration by exploiting the common mistrust of ZANU-PF shared with ex-ZIPRA groups. They were met with a considerable degree of scepticism and at times outright disdain by the 'genuine' ex-ZIPRA dissident troops and the rural masses who found it repugnant that these soldiers would allow themselves to be

⁶¹⁵ CCJP & LRF, 1997: 30. According to the authors of *Breaking the Silence*: “Operation Drama was the South African code name for the undercover support of Zimbabwean dissidents... Precise numbers of Super ZAPU and the degree of material support offered by South Africa to Zimbabwean dissidents remain largely conjectural, although it is clear the Zimbabwean operation was far less extensive than those in Angola and Mozambique, which operated concurrently.”

⁶¹⁶ CCJP & LRF, 1997: 34.

⁶¹⁷ Yap, K. 2001: 192.

the sponsored and manipulated by the White enemy regime of South Africa. In the words of two ex-ZIPRA combatants turned dissidents:

“We could never work with South Africa as the independence war was against such countries. We were not fighting to help South Africa. We were fighting to include everyone in the government of this country...We did not group with those people [Super-ZAPU]. They were moving around with their own part. We knew [they were not ZIPRA] because we knew each other...We were in that unit where people were trained before, in the first struggle. Those were from South Africa, we did not have them.”⁶¹⁸

“But, the problem now, there [we]re a lot of pseudo-dissidents, people who claim[ed] to be dissidents. Some of them with very clean camouflage and everything, who w[ould] come and claim to be dissidents. Some of them came to the school when we were still in Primary school in 1983, and they claimed to be dissidents. We were surprised, and they were carrying everything, they even [had] on the National Army uniform, and they asked people to cook for them, and the people would cook. So nobody was actually certain who [wa]s who during that period... You see, to the ordinary people of Gwanda, it was...very, very hard for them to actually separate Super-ZAPU with what. To us, we knew that he’s a ZAPU dissident or a government ... *This other third element of Super-ZAPU it was only known in intellectual circles but among peasant communities nobody could make any difference.* Because Super-ZAPU, as far as I understand their operations, they ‘claimed’ to be dissidents, so that they could not say that you are Super-ZAPU.”⁶¹⁹

The other major third-force dissident element in Matabeleland was that of the criminal opportunists, who took advantage of the vacuum left in the wake of the Gukurahundi violence in order to illegally garner material resources for themselves, often under the guise of political intrigue.

“...[T]here is one who is in Vulabuzza, I know him, he was just a ZANU-PF...he was stealing money...to me, like that one, he was just a criminal, who had an access to an AK47. And he robs, stole, kill other people, just to get money. But there are others in areas like Tsholotsho, Lupane, and those areas, those people were sent there, because some of them they couldn’t even speak Ndebele. They were sent there so that whenever they do something, the army will get a way of getting in. ‘We are looking for this person who did this and this’. It was funny because most of these so-called ‘dissidents’, you’ll hear that dissidents killed so-and-so, he’s a ZAPU-PF senior member. If they were dissident from ZIPRA, they will support and respect other ZIPRA structures. If they were claiming that ‘we are with you Nkomo but we don’t understand the situation’, you were not

⁶¹⁸ Yap, K. 2001: 193.

⁶¹⁹ Interview: SG1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 20/12/07 - (Ndebele Professor of Political Science, researcher and author).

supposed to kill other people, they can't do that. So, to me, I really didn't believe [the dissidents existed].”⁶²⁰

“There was a final group of what has been referred to as ‘pseudo dissidents’, including the gang led by Gayigusu in Matabeleland South, which was responsible for the murder of 16 missionaries in November of 1987. This gang was allegedly the personal ‘hit squad’ of politically powerful ZANU-PF officials in this part of the country.”⁶²¹

6.2.4. Manufactured Insurgency

The strongest argument in favour of a *manufactured insurgency* is encapsulated in the volumes of direct victim's statements that verify a barrage of arbitrary acts of severe violence and random campaigns of terror enacted on the rural Matabeleland civilian populations in the 1980s. As discussed in earlier sections of this chapter, this tactic provided the surest way to create ‘dissidents’ whose rage was readily acted out in ‘justified’, militant cycles of revenge. However, two other pieces of pivotal evidence that point in the direction of a manufactured insurgency revolve around the *systematic purging* of ex-ZIPRA soldiers from the Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA) and the phenomena of ZANU-PF *soldiers playing the role of ‘dissidents’*. Both of these narratives have been continually subjugated by the ZANU-PF who maintain a deafening silence and complete disregard for the plausibility of these counter narratives of explanation.

6.2.4.1. Systematic Purging of the Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA)

From the respondent testimonials in this research, the purging that occurred in the ZNA was clearly instigated against the ex-ZIPRA combatants by the majority ex-ZANLA soldiers who had now taken control of the military structures.

“Yes, but the dissidents were there few in number, but they were the creation of ZANU-PF. You see the dissident issue did not just erupt because people were disgruntled, or because people just wanted to fight the government. When it came to the integration of the army in independent Zimbabwe, those who were ZIPRA, followers of Joshua Nkomo, and those under the party of ZAPU, *found themselves discriminated against in integration. But those few also who were integrated were victimised*. I do have friends who tell us that it was very unbearable to stay in the army. They were told again and again that they were Ndebeles, they did not have

⁶²⁰ Interview: RM1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 14/09/06 – (Ndebele former security officer for opposition party and survivor of severe torture as a political prisoner under the ZANU-PF government).

⁶²¹ CCJP & LRF, 1997: 35.

any country, so then there was no reason for them to serve in the army. Or at least they were supposed accept very inferior positions in the army as messengers and so forth and not do the real work of soldiers.”⁶²²

“The stories that we’re hearing was that the ZIPRA Forces, those that were part of the ZIPRA Forces were being frustrated in the government. And some of them maybe were being killed unnecessarily, how - I don’t know...*And therefore there was that dissatisfaction; they were not being given positions of power in the military and-so-forth, because they were former ZIPRA fighters.* And therefore some of them, to escape what was happening in the Army, or maybe being killed in the Army, they left. Where they were going I don’t know. Whether they were going into the bush, I can not sit here and say I know there were dissidents. We only heard from the press that there were dissidents, some of them being named. So, it could be true that, there could have been one or two or three...there could have been a few. That could be true, but not warranting the genocide that happened.”⁶²³

What is less determinable is whether or not this purging was a system-wide strategy with the endorsement of the top ZANU-PF politicians and military leaders, or it was an initiative of the newly integrated rank and file ex-ZANLA soldiers who were feeling particularly empowered in their status as the majority. However, evidence from the following transcripts does suggest that certain high ranking ZANU-PF government and military officials were implicated:

“It was in 1980. Then in 1982, when the Gukurahundi went effective, they addressed by this man *Enos Nkala* [ZANU-PF minister]. *He addressed us right in the Army.* The first thing that came from his mouth: “I know here that [there are those]...of Joshua Nkomo. I am going to wipe all small ethnic groups, including you in the Army. Can you lift your hand who belong to ZIPRA?’ Nobody lifted his hand. We rediscovered the situation is now bad. We have started to point each other by the name: ‘John Nkomo, Albert Nyoni, Kenneth Phiri, you are now changing from this battalion to another battalion’. Then the person goes forever. I know so many disappeared. It started like that in the Army.”⁶²⁴

“During that time when the disturbances were continuing, people were thrown out of the trains, and a lot of murdering was going around. We reported all the matters to the officer commanding. Even that could not help us. Because we were sometimes taken by the police even if we were within the army, taken to be

⁶²² Interview: FN1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 26/10/07 – (Ndebele Finance Manager and former employee of the ZANU-PF Ministry of Finance and the National Oil Company of Zimbabwe in the early 1980s).

⁶²³ Interview: DN1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 29/03/07 – (Ndebele Church Leader whose father was killed by 5th Brigade soldiers in 1984).

⁶²⁴ Interview: AN2, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 12/09/07 – (Ndebele Ex-ZIPRA Soldier).

murdered. *The Battalion commanders knew all that was happening but they could not say anything. They were just quiet. We did not know what was the problem.*⁶²⁵

Another respondent recounted the story of his three brothers who were ex-ZIPRA soldiers initially integrated into the ZNA and two of which later defected. One brother departed from the ZNA because of the disrespect he felt being commanded by young, less qualified ex-ZANLA soldiers who abused their positions and started beating him. The other brother was accused of participating in the instigation of the Entumbane clashes and was forced to serve a six-month military prison sentence, after which time he left the ZNA.

“...[My brother] was saying that they then found other people who were ex-ZANLA combatants and they had a very low esteem of ZANLA combatants. So they were now their Commanders and starting to beat them so they thought it’s better to leave. Then the second one [brother] who left in 1983, his story is the same. His story is even more interesting because he participated in the Entumbane crisis. He was working at the Gwayi assembly point. And he said that he spent six months in detention for that particular participation.”⁶²⁶

The experience of the third brother of this respondent who did stay in the service of the ZNA supplies a poignant argument for the idea that the dissidents may well have been an illusion, a figment of ZANU-PF’s political imagination:

“And he remained in the Military up to today. But he says, in the Military, how did you cope in the Military when they were saying that your colleagues are dissidents? *He says ‘I challenge[d] them every day to tell us where are the dissidents and we go and capture them’. There were no dissidents anywhere. So they were saying that there are dissidents out there killing people and now it is in doubt that they are there. So they never deployed them to go capture those dissidents that they were talking about every day.*”⁶²⁷

Apparently there was not only persecution from within the ranks of the ZNA, but even after many of the ex-ZIPRA deserted the army, they were continually hounded and hunted down by ZANU-PF security personnel, some were arrested and taken out of their

⁶²⁵ Yap, K. 2001: 135. Taken from: Zimbabwe Project. 1993. *Called Down Home* (video). Harare: Zimbabwe Project with Oxfam (UK) and Novib (Netherlands).

⁶²⁶ Interview: SG1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 20/12/07 - (Ndebele Professor of Political Science, researcher and author now based out of an international university in the UK).

⁶²⁷ Ibid.

homes only to never be seen again. The following first-hand testimony bears witness to this harassment:

“But unfortunately, when you enter in Zimbabwe National Army you were taught to write our CV’s, where you operated, in which wing you belong, ZIPRA, ZANLA. Stupid enough we didn’t know what was going to happen; we wrote exactly our background. They started to pick us one by one. So many disappeared up to now...I wasn’t in the Army during that time, I was on leave. They started to make road-blocks. They knew that we were on leave, we are going to the Army, they started road-blocks. We were given IDs of the Army and the card of photos. Then they wanted you to show your identity when you come to the road-block. They had information about that one... *it was better to have nothing than to have something to identify yourself*. So other guys that identified themselves...up to now we don’t know their whereabouts. Secondly, I went to the Army, I came back. *Then one day they came...just having my name. I asked exactly what he has. ‘Army no. 8314, just come outside’. I was hit like nothing. My arms broke here. I was tortured like anything.* The only thing he asked me was this question: ‘Why did you go to Zambia instead [of] go[ing] to Mozambique?’ that was the only question. ‘Tell us how were you trained’. Third one: ‘As from today, as soon as possible, just tell us so that you can support your father Joshua Nkomo’. I was kicked in the stomach...my experience was that so many were killed.”⁶²⁸

6.2.4.2. Protector and Perpetrator: The two faces of the ZANU-PF Security Forces

Simultaneously, while ex-ZIPRA soldiers were being expunged from the ZNA, numerous accounts of Matabeleland victims indicate that ZANU-PF security forces (in particular the Fifth Brigade) would function as ‘*soldiers-by-day*’ and disguise themselves as ‘*dissidents-by-night*’. This strategy of double role-playing is not an unusual in times of war; in the recent civil war of Sierra Leone these imposters were called “sobels” a cross between the words ‘soldiers’ and ‘rebels’.⁶²⁹ The key point of this identity masquerading is that it served the dual purposes of causing considerable confusion in the civilian populace and it multiplied the energy of hate which was the fertilizer for the seed-bed of enemy-construction. As in the words of Bishop Karlen: “People had the impression that

⁶²⁸ Interview: AN2, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 12/09/07 – (Ndebele Ex-ZIPRA Soldier).

⁶²⁹ Interview: SM1, Durban, South Africa – 07/03/07 – (Ndebele teacher, researcher and university lecturer): “I think that reminds me of Paul Koliona’s ‘greed or grievance’, where he posts this theory of Resource Predation, where you find that the government personnel, because of greed, they predate over their own people during the night, but during the day they come as government leaders representing the people.”

the dissident problem was artificially forced on them, so as to give reason to smash up the people.”⁶³⁰ The following transcripts lend weight to this impression:

“And then by the way, the issue of the Gukurahundi with the dissidents; I don’t know if it was a ploy to flush out the dissidents or if it was a deliberate way of ensuring that more people got killed, the same tactic was used by Smith...there would be people dressing up as dissidents, getting into a room and demand for food and then thereafter they come back and say ‘you see, there were dissidents here’. *So I don’t know if it was a ploy to get information or it was a strategy to wipe out the people, I do not know, but those kind of tactics were also used.*”⁶³¹

“But even up to now I still believe that it were not the dissidents. Yes, I do agree that there were dissidents, true, there were dissidents. There were people who were not happy with the ZANU government and they defected *but*, now also as a way to inflict violence into people in Matabeleland, the Army would use that pretext to come in the night as dissidents. *So that the following morning they will find a reason to inflict pain on the people of those particular communities.*”⁶³²

While these deceptive tactics provided opportunity for ZANU-PF security structures to extract information from the rural Ndebele communities, most respondents seem to agree that this ploy was utilised in order to justify the extreme violence (killing, torture and disappearances) that was being carried out by the state-sanctioned security forces. Specific incidents of soldier-dissident role switching variations (including wearing non-combatant uniforms) were also cited by both primary and secondary witnesses from the interview samples:

“But what was very interesting is that in the evenings, not necessarily evening but late afternoon, before sunset you would then see them [soldiers] leave the Mission and going out into the villages out there. And, in the mornings you would then see people coming trying to come and make calls, or coming to report that ‘we had experiences with dissidents the previous night’. And having known that these people were there at Mwenezi, and having seen them leave the Mission going to the villages, *I knew definitely that they were the ones who were going out and pretending to be what?...Dissidents.*”⁶³³

“You see, now I am reading back. To me, there was actually an attempt to manufacture dissidents, and there was a deliberate...the people from the National

⁶³⁰ Yap, K. 2001: 232.

⁶³¹ Interview: JN1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 29/03/07 – (Ndebele teacher and activist working for the Catholic Commission on Peace and Justice CCJP in the 1980s).

⁶³² Interview: SM1, Durban, South Africa – 07/03/07 – (Ndebele teacher, researcher and university lecturer).

⁶³³ Interview: DN1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 29/03/07 – (Ndebele Church Leader whose father was killed by 5th Brigade soldiers in 1984).

Army they would sometimes turn, and claim to be the dissidents. And I remember this other teacher who used to teach us (Grade 6), they [soldiers] came to their village during the night. And luckily enough they had [a] newly painted house, and these people stood and they leaned against the wall, and they asked them to cook for them. The following morning, they were there saying ‘we understand the dissidents were here’. And this teacher actually pointed to them that ‘no, but the paint is still on your shirt, you were the one[s] who were here yesterday’. But immediately he raised that issue, the result now is the violence. *This is not to discount that there were dissidents. But personally, the people I saw, Ah! I still have doubts if they were dissidents.*”⁶³⁴

“Then secondly, there was a trip of nurses from Kai to St Paul. So these people called ‘peace’ people were the very same people who made a disaster. These ‘peace’ people, they were very difficult to identify them, they are wearing uniform combat, support unit...police uniform. Their start is this: they come and pick a person in a police uniform, they go and report he was beaten [to] the Police, they make a [case] that he was present in the police, they pick a person who is wearing a military clothes and report in the Military camp, ...So they say the soldiers are also vulnerable during the day. They made an ambush when the nurses were from St Paul to Kai, to say [ex]-ZIPRA only killed Ndebele people...that’s how these people acted.”⁶³⁵

In summary, these statements indicate that while the ZANU-PF used overt violence to subdue any public opposition they simultaneously master-minded covert operations within the security structures at their disposal in order to systematically drive out the nodes of internal resistance that appeared to have the potential to diffuse their totalizing grip on national political power.

6.3. Narratives of Disloyalty and Dehumanisation

6.3.1. Stripping of Identity: The Polarising Labels of Hero and Dissident

The myths that have mushroomed around the polarizing labels of ‘*dissident*’ and ‘*hero*’ in the Matabeleland conflict have become larger-than-life. Due to the overt negative and positive connotations of these titles, the mysterious layers of human motive and the veiled innuendos of intention within the context of the Matabeleland violence have often been lost. These popularized dichotomies represented an oversimplified ‘either/or’ categorization of ‘good guy verses bad guy’ which was bound to truncate any

⁶³⁴ Interview: SG1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 20/12/07 - (Ndebele Professor of Political Science, researcher and author).

⁶³⁵ Interview: AN2, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 12/09/07 – (Ndebele Ex-ZIPRA Soldier).

thorough analysis of the ‘root causes’ of the Matabeleland conflict. Even more disturbing is the rhetorical discourse around *loyalty* and *disloyalty* that has been attached to, and wrapped around these two identifications which is the concern of this Chapter. With striking consistency a majority of the interview respondents of this research described the ZANU-PF’s definition of a ‘hero’ as a highly politicised process that hinged on one’s loyalty to the ruling party ideologies and policies.

*“Well, for me, I understood government saying ‘anyone complying with what government was saying and accepting the new ruler, the new president, and also accepting the system of government was a hero, and heroes were not only those who had fought the war. It was all ... even those rallying behind the new government they were heroes because they were celebrating the heroism of the new government; that was being heroic. But those who are still aloof like the dissidents, then for them, those were not heroes. They said those had different or hidden agendas when they went to war. It has come in the open now that they had hidden agenda’s. That’s how they put it.”*⁶³⁶

*“In Zimbabwe, ‘a hero’ as defined by the government, is somebody who supports ZANU-PF. If you do not support ZANU-PF you are not a hero. And you’ll find that, all those people who go to the Heroes Acre are only those who go in line with the thinking of ZANU-PF, and particularly Mugabe. I will take for example people like Ndabaningi Sithole. Sithole played a very vital role in the Liberation Struggle of our country. And many people thought, even though he had differences with the ZANU-PF, he deserved to be at the Heroes’ Acre, but that did not happen. Because Mugabe felt he didn’t buy his ideas, and is therefore not a hero. And to the government at the present moment, the ‘heroes’ are only those that are in line with Mugabe’s thinking. And I can safely say that it’s Mugabe who determines ‘who becomes a hero’. Whether you fought in the Struggle for Independence, it doesn’t matter. But what matters is how he views you, if you are a threat to him, you may not be a hero.”*⁶³⁷

“So basically, I think it would appear to me that ‘a hero’ really is mostly defined by Mugabe. For me it does not make sense that when somebody dies whose credentials is well-known that a special priority meeting needs to be called to decide what status to confer upon him, it doesn’t make sense, a hero is a hero. If somebody has fought for the country, he is a national hero; what’s there to decide about him. It’s got to do with the commitment, with the sacrifice, and with the service that that person gave to the nation, more than some definitive parameters that have been set by a particular party. Because the other thing is, who is ZANU

⁶³⁶ Interview: NM1, Mtshabezi, Zimbabwe – 28/06/06 – (Female Ndebele Peace Activist working with rural Matabeleland women).

⁶³⁷ Interview: CM2, Kitwe, Zambia – 09/05/07 - (Ndebele teacher and community development worker with Orphans and Vulnerable Children, former Political Activist and Youth Leader for ZAPU in the early 1980s).

to tell us who the hero is? You know. Are these ZANU-PF's heroes or are they Zimbabwean heroes? Because if they are Zimbabwean heroes, then where are we in the whole situation?"⁶³⁸

Aside from unwavering loyalty to the ZANU-PF party, other definitions of a 'hero' rotated around association as former 'liberation fighters', those able to eliminate all potential threats, or those with the 'status' of carrying a gun. However, when asked to define 'what was a hero' in their own minds, the interview responses moved far beyond loyalty in party-politics and armed combatants of the past to include those who are disciplined on the job, who serve others and the nation selflessly, who contribute to society through the arts or agriculture, and those who fight corruption and advocate for life. The responses were both insightful and varied, providing creative alternative 'hero' narratives for the everyday Zimbabwean's to live by:

Diagram 2: Sample Definitions of a Hero

AN2 (Ex-Soldier)	"The meaning of a 'hero' doesn't mean a person who fought, no. Anybody who does his job, in a good manner, in a disciplined way, he achieves his goals, he's called a hero."
DN3 (Peace worker)	"For me, a hero is not necessarily attached to the Struggle only. I would see a 'hero' as somebody that has given their service to the nation, you know."
JN1 (Teacher)	"To me a hero is somebody who has selflessly given his life for the service of other people without counting the costs on his person...that to me is a hero."
SD1 (Journalist)	"But if you ask me 'who is a hero', I will tell you that any person who gave his life to liberate the country, whether you're a ZIPRA or ZANLA, whether you're a Shona or Ndebele, whether you're a Black or White', any person who gave their life, who viewed the Liberation of the country as a priority more important even than their lives. To me, those people stand out as heroes."
DN1 (Church Leader)	"[H]eroes are in people's hearts, in my view...So national heroes in my view should not only come from the Liberation Struggle, per say, they must come from the contributions people make [in] society. Be it in music, be it in agriculture, be it in what-have-you, people that contribute mass[ive]ly to the development of this country."

⁶³⁸ Interview: DN3, Johannesburg, South Africa – 30/10/07 – (Ndebele NGO peace worker facilitating trauma healing and reconciliation among rural Matabeleland communities and survivors of Gukurahundi violence).

PK1 (Member of Royal Family)	“So in reality, I think there is no hero in Zimbabwe, until we have one that can build nationhood...If you get that, where you eliminate discretion, eliminate corruption, and you bring in accountability and build up a nation where there’s respect for each other, then ‘that’ person will be a hero.”
JD1 (Woman NGO Activist)	“Yes, before we had heroes, the ones who brought the Independence but from there, they turned to be monsters. I think...if you are a hero then you kill your people you are not considered a hero anymore, you are a monster now. We don’t have heroes in Zimbabwe. The heroes are those in the Diaspora that are trying to make noise for the situation in Zimbabwe.”

On the other hand, to be given the identity label of ‘dissident’ was, figuratively, a kiss of death. The ‘dissident’ position was to be compared to a traitor or one who has betrayed ‘The Cause’. For liberation soldiers, this badge of dissonance meant one was stripped of all the identity, dignity and meaning that surrounded the sacrifice of being a freedom fighter. To be called a ‘dissident’ was tantamount to being accused and convicted of treason and for the noble revolutionary this was a capital crime punishable by death. For an Ex-ZIPRA or ex-ZANLA soldier to be declared unpatriotic was the highest level of betrayal to the Liberation movement and subsequently those who were marked as ‘dissidents’ would rather have died than be considered disloyal to the cause. Instead of following a path of introspection around their personal levels of loyalty and subsequent disloyalty to the ZANU-PF, the ‘dissidents’ turned their attention to questioning the essence of the Liberation movement as defined and represented by the ZANU-PF regime.

As was noted earlier in this chapter, at the genesis of the post-independence violence in Matabeleland, there was a more cautious and nuanced use of descriptors that did not allow for this kind of divisive interpretation of ‘dissident’ and ‘hero’. However it was not long before these titles were engraved on the template of the ZANU-PF national narrative. With this entrenchment came a kind of imprisonment; a death sentence (both literally and figuratively) to those who were named as ‘dissidents.’ Literal examples would be the arrest and illegal imprisonment without trial of Dumiso Dabengwa and Lookout Masuku plus five other top ex-ZIPRA military officers in 1982. In another instance, in a lengthy personal letter addressed to President Robert Mugabe dated 7 June

1983, Joshua Nkomo protested the human rights and legal abuses of those accused of being dissidents:

“Some 300 Zipra combatants and a few Zanla, who were arrested after the troubles in a battalion camp near Karoi, were detained secretly somewhere near Harare and taken in small batches to be court-martialled and executed with no right of appeal and without informing their next of kin.”⁶³⁹

This is but one of many cases in point where this kind of arbitrary ‘life and death’ condemnation was transacted by the ZANU-PF regime in its determination to erect narratives of dissidence and to strip ex-ZIPRA combatants of their identity as liberation soldiers.

6.3.2. Stripping of Ideology: The Drama of Social Exclusion

The Matabeleland dissidents were ‘*marginalised belligerents left out of the conversation*’⁶⁴⁰ of revolutionary struggle. In dramaturgical analysis, these so-called ‘dissidents’ were being excluded from the curtain call, abandoned in the shadows of the stage wings although they felt that they had a major role in the unfolding drama of independence. They refused to be left out of the play, so they disrupted the encore. This ‘hijacking’ of the grand finale bought them the label of dissidents. Once they were tagged ‘dissidents’ (meaning those who were no longer on the side of a moral and just cause for struggle), their personal history as ‘freedom fighters’ was being erased. It was as if all that they had fought for, all that they had sacrificed their lives for, was being blotted out of the historical narrative of liberation in Zimbabwe. This was not only conceived as unacceptable but more importantly, a matter of life and death. Thus, the ‘dissidents’ took the stage by force again re-enacting the roles they knew best; that of the drama of performance violence. As has been discussed in previous chapters, the redistribution and ownership of the land was pivotal to their ideological platform,

“Because you will realize that the ZIPRA...they had bought a lot of farms. Joshua Nkomo believed that, like I said in the beginning, *Joshua Nkomo believed that the empowerment of the people; is to giving them land. And he had bought quite a lot of farms, and in these farms he had sent some of the ZIPRA Forces to look into these farms. Because I was told and I believe that he had wanted the ZIPRA Forces to say after they had been demobilised from the Army, they should go and work in the land.* And these guys [ex-ZIPRA] were saying ‘we do not want to go

⁶³⁹ ‘Nkomo speaks from the grave’. (2005) *The Zimbabwean*, (Vol. 1, No 37) 21-27 October.

⁶⁴⁰ Richards, P. 1996. *Fighting for the Rain Forest*. Oxford: James Curry, xxiv.

to the Army [ZNA] because we are not satisfied'... Well, I'm not very sure whether they were taking this from Joshua Nkomo but from their own point of view they were saying they were not happy and they were not really willing to join the ZANU-PF government along those lines."⁶⁴¹

"Can you imagine that ZIPRA Forces up to Independence, they bought farms, they wanted to go into agriculture and farming and the like. They used their resources to buy the land to do the farming, but what happened later, he took that away. Bob took the land away and part of the equipment. And, many years down the road he continues to go and take some land from some other people and say he's going to give to the people, the Blacks, when he took some lands from the Blacks himself again. I don't accept that it was genuine. One time the Vice-President Msika, some ex-combatant... not very long ago, [he] mentioned that he was not very happy with it [land redistribution]. He [Msika] used very strong words to kind-of tell the guys to keep quiet and never raise that up. That's where I see hypocrisy, myself. If we had followed up that approach [ZAPU land policy], probably nobody could have been forced in the Land Redistribution Act. We wouldn't have lost the lives in the process of the Land Redistribution, I don't think so."⁶⁴²

6.3.3. Stripping of History: A Forgotten Past

The ZANU-PF narrative around 'Heroes and Dissidents' effectively served to deconstruct the revolutionary vision of the ex-ZIPRA soldiers and the ZAPU as an oppositional political party. Whether ZANU-PF was intentional in this aim or not, it came as a by-product of the production of a meta-narrative, the resulting backlash was highly provocative and inciting for those named as dissidents. The ZANU-PF narrative of dissidents invoked a sense of innate dishonouring that was totalizing in its effect. In the context of Zimbabwe's newly acclaimed independence, to be reviled as a dissident in life was a heavy burden to bear, and to realise that at death there would be no burial in the Heroes Acre, a place of historical national pride and patriotism, was a final blow to the warrior's honour and dignity.

"But it is defined in the context of what makes Ubuntu – 'I am who I am by the people around me.' Now if we as a people are attacked at the very centre of who we are, and we have no history, when our history is being attacked, and not only that, but we cannot identify ourselves with the country in which our ancestors died; my sense of belonging and self-worth is actually attacked. That point is where our African trauma comes in. *Because to be a human being and you have*

⁶⁴¹ Interview: CM2, Kitwe, Zambia – 09/05/07 - (Ndebele teacher and community development worker with Orphans and Vulnerable Children, former Political Activist and Youth Leader for ZAPU in the early 1980s).

⁶⁴² Interview: AN1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 12/09/07 – (Ndebele Church leader and Peace activist).

no belonging, no history, no identity, no connection, to live like an alien in a land of your forefathers, and the threatening of your whole tribal group to a point where people were burnt or annihilated, was not only genocide or atrocity, but evil. Seriously evil that needs to be condemned with the harshest and strongest of words.”⁶⁴³

By declaring the opposition as dissident, ZANU-PF had essentially written the ZAPU-ZIPRA alliance out of the national history and consigned them to a bleak existence of traitorous shame in both life and death. Early on, ZANU-PF embarked on a vigorous plan for the production of its revolutionary history which entailed both an official record of the Liberation struggle and a revised school curriculum covering the history of Zimbabwe. The Chronicle newspaper printed the following:

“Meanwhile, Cde Mugabe announced that ZANU (PF) is working on his biography and a comprehensive chronicle of the liberation struggle. He said the ZANU (PF) secretary for information and publicity, Cde Nathan Shamuyarira, was ‘tasked with this detail of our revolution’.”⁶⁴⁴

The rapid transformation of the country’s educational system was high on the ZANU-PF’s priority list. The government vigorously built new schools across the nation. Ironically, in Matabeleland a number of schools were built by the Fifth Brigade soldiers in what appeared to be an exercise in ‘damage-control’ or an apparent show of goodwill through patriotic national service. However, after the building of schools, the ZANU-PF government began to fill the teaching posts with external assignments mostly from Mashonaland, leaving the Ndebele population unconvinced that this was a positive change. The newly posted Shona teachers presented Matabeleland with three concerns: First, because of the serious control of information by the ZANU-PF, many of them would have been uninformed about the Gukurahundi crisis. Second, many of these teachers would have been staunch supporters of ZANU-PF and therefore unsympathetic to the cause of the opposition party ZAPU and the victimisation perpetrated by the security forces against the rural communities. Third, many of them would not have been fluent in the regional language of Ndebele. On top of this, the teachers were required to introduce a new, uniform national history curriculum that according to many in

⁶⁴³ Interview: RM2, Johannesburg, South Africa - 26/02/08 – (Shona NGO peace activist advocating for trauma healing and reconciliation among rural Matabeleland communities and survivors of Gukurahundi violence).

⁶⁴⁴ ‘ZAPU has links with dissidents – PM’. (1987) *The Chronicle*, 1 October.

Matabeleland was distinctly biased toward the perspectives and interests of ZANU-PF alone.

“But now when I go back to schools, the history has changed. They are teaching the children ZANU-PF history. *It’s not a national history...but it’s a Party history.* They are teaching children about the Party, and how they should follow the Party. To the general public and to educationists they feel it’s not the History of our nation, but it’s the Party History; which is very bad because as Zimbabweans we are not concerned about Party history, but we want children to know about the history of our country.”⁶⁴⁵

“That history [currently taught] leaves a lot to be desired because it only claims that it was ZANU-PF and ZANLA who won the Struggle for Independence. They make some claims...that it was ZANLA which made first attacks on White settlements. Yet, what we know is that ZIPRA is older than ZANLA, in its formations and operations, in the country. *And any ZIPRA activity is not highlighted anywhere, but what is highlighted is what the ZANLA did; which is a one-sided history, an incomplete history.*”⁶⁴⁶

In his critical work on the production of ‘patriotic history’ in Zimbabwe, Professor Terence Ranger differentiates between three processes of national historical interrogation. According to Ranger, *Nationalist Historiography* is “an attempt to trace the roots of nationalism and present narratives leading to its triumphant emergence.”⁶⁴⁷ The *History of Nationalism* on the other hand, is an attempt to outline the growth and evolution of a “movement and its ideology with a great deal of rigorous historical questioning.”⁶⁴⁸ Finally, *Patriotic History* as a process “is different from and more narrow than the old nationalist historiography, which celebrated aspiration and modernisation as well as resistance. It resents the ‘disloyal’ questions raised by historians of nationalism. It regards as irrelevant any history which is not political and it is explicitly antagonistic to academic historiography.”⁶⁴⁹

Professor Ranger strikes at the core of the ZANU-PF grand narrative which is so dependent on the continual and consistent manufacturing of a monolithic stream of

⁶⁴⁵ Interview: CM2, Kitwe, Zambia – 09/05/07 – (Ndebele teacher and community development worker with Orphans and Vulnerable Children, former Political Activist and Youth Leader for ZAPU in the early 1980s).

⁶⁴⁶ Interview: SM1, Durban, South Africa – 07/03/07 – (Ndebele teacher, researcher and university lecturer).

⁶⁴⁷ Ranger, T. 2003. “Nationalist Historiography, Patriotic History and the History of the Nation: the struggle over the past in Zimbabwe”. *Journal for Southern African Studies* 30 (2). 2.

⁶⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁹ Ibid: 5.

political consciousness in order to disregard if not obliterate any contrary investigations into history. Ranger's stated position on the Liberation history of Zimbabwe is straight forward: "You could have too much history if a single, narrow historical narrative gained a monopoly and was endlessly repeated...Now it has become necessary to complicate oversimplifications; to offer a plural history."⁶⁵⁰ The following transcript text gives examples of official efforts by the ZANU-PF to use the media to co-opt particular happenings in history for its own benefit and public prestige.

"There were two incidents that attracted my attention; when the fuel tanks in Harare, then Salisbury, were bombarded, it was categorically stated it was ZIPRA forces, and those people are still alive. Two or three years ago on TV it was stated that it was ZANLA forces and those people are now either still alive. By then, being known to have done such damage would have actually discredited you. The Viscount [Rhodesian Tourist Airplane] which discredited ZAPU completely was downed by the ZIPRA forces. But now of late I'm told it was the ZANLA forces. Those who did it are still alive. Now who am I to believe? This kind of writing doesn't come home well. From the little I have heard, I haven't read, again this is more on the radio, on the TV, *the contribution done by the ZIPRA has been played down so much that it would appear that it was only the ZANLA forces which fought the war...* Maybe I need to go back to the History text books and find out what is coming and getting in. But my fear is there has been a distortion."⁶⁵¹

At the core of this systematic 'stripping' away of the identity, ideology and history the ZANU-PF engaged in a visceral struggle with the ZAPU-ZIPRA alliance around the deep socio-political inclinations of *recognition* and *belonging*. Both of these 'felt' needs are sources of 'meaning-making' in the conflict transformation process and indeed in life as a whole. It is these conceptions of recognition and belonging that will be wrestled with in the subsequent section.

6.4. The Politics of Recognition: Scripts of Belonging

In liberation struggles where the tremendous trauma of war has been experienced by individuals and collectives, fierce patriotism and nationalistic pride become critical sources of hope and the foundation for healing in the future.⁶⁵² To be guilty of disloyalty

⁶⁵⁰ Ibid: 4.

⁶⁵¹ Interview: JN1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 29/03/07 – (Ndebele teacher and activist working for the Catholic Commission on Peace and Justice, CCJP in the 1980s).

⁶⁵² Grossman, D. 1995. *On Killing – The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society*. New York: Back Bay Books - Little, Brown & Co. Military research since World War II has established that returning war veterans reintegrate into civilian society considerably more satisfactorily if they have received a hero's welcome home; if the country has afforded them a warrior's honour for their service to

as a soldier was to have failed, to be dissolved of one's identity (disconnected), and dignity (disempowered). This fundamental human need for *belonging* (affirmed by the transference of loyalty) was denied the 'dissidents' and their supporting communities by the overpowering monologue of the ZANU-PF. As a result, it has become the pulsating undercurrent that remains the motivation for the present-day narrative expressions of resistance emanating from the repressed voices in Matabeleland. Speaking of the official narrative of explanation for the violence of Gukurahundi endorsed by the ZANU-PF regime, this interviewee links the language used by the state and the central issue of belonging.

“The little I can still recall, cause it's now a long time ago, it was more like the 'hate' language; 'the dissidents, the murderers, the rapists, people who are out to destroy development', that was the kind of language. I do not recall specifically something I could pin down on and say this was it. But otherwise, you know...the word itself 'dissident' its connotation is like... 'you do not seem to agree, therefore you are not one of us; you do not belong.'”⁶⁵³

This research effort is less concerned with the '*strategies*' of the dissidents actions and more interested in the life '*scripts*' behind their motivations and choices to become dissidents or not. Of importance here is to understand the *politics of recognition*⁶⁵⁴ within this context. In revolutionary ideology the politics of recognition is of utmost value in that it establishes a socio-political status of respect that is worth dying for and certainly on par with any transaction of economic currency (material) exchange that may accompany it. During the time of struggle in order to keep the young soldier recruits motivated, there was a glorification of 'The Cause' for the struggle and a grandiose valuation of the personhood and valour of a freedom fighter. Those who gave up family, education and other privileges to sacrifice themselves on the front-lines of war were magnified in their standing as valiant warriors, leaders and even 'saviours' of the people.

the nation. In cases where the war was a highly unpopular engagement and the soldiers return to antagonism their adjustment is greatly retarded. In the USA, the Vietnam War veterans continue to represent a statistically higher percentage than the national average in regards to the social challenges of suicide, substance abuse, mental illness, imprisonment and domestic violence perpetration. This is believed to be a direct result of the sense of rejection (even disdain) that they felt and received from the US public upon their return from Vietnam.

⁶⁵³ Interview: JN1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 29/03/07 – (Ndebele teacher and activist working for the Catholic Commission on Peace and Justice CCJP in the 1980s).

⁶⁵⁴ Taylor, C. 1994. *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

As with any wartime context, the motivations to put life and limb on the line were wrapped up in and intertwined with the symbolic and material promises of recognition after freedom was attained. The following transcriptions tie the psycho-social themes emanating from the desire for recognition to issues of *origins* (in the face of dislocation from country and city of birth) and the call for human *dignity* (in the face of disrespect for culture, language, gender identity and family boundaries):

“And then the other thing that they [ex-ZIPRA combatants] found frustrating was that they were told that they did not contribute much in the fighting of the country and therefore then they were not supposed to have been there [in the Army]. It was said that they did not contribute in the fighting of the country because *the country was not theirs, being Ndebele, the country was not theirs.*”⁶⁵⁵

“And I think that is indicative of the stories that have travelled in time, even twenty years and twenty eight years after. That the same stories are still perpetuated to the point where *Bulawayo, the second largest city, is referred to as a ‘dissident city’*, because they say they don’t like the government of Zimbabwe, the Shona government.”⁶⁵⁶

“*Stripping them [supposed dissidents] of their identity and hitting them at the very centre of their culture as well*, e.g. their wives and their mothers, sisters were being raped in open. And they would be killed; they would be beaten in front of their own children. Now to an Ndebele man, who is supposed to be the ‘king in his own home’ to be seen to be traumatised and cry in front of his own wife and his kids, is unacceptable. And these people would be forced to repeat things in the same language they hated which they couldn’t speak anyway. They didn’t even know some of the things they said. So you still see that the language in itself has become identified with the trauma that the people have suffered.”⁶⁵⁷

These emergent narratives are fuelled by the fundamental human need for public recognition. Author Axel Honneth⁶⁵⁸ has focused much of his work on the politics of ‘recognition’ as it relates to conflict. Honneth propagates the idea that in order for identity-formation to be complete it clearly depends on the development of three components of self: self-confidence, self-respect, and self-esteem. According to

⁶⁵⁵ Interview: FN1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 26/10/07 – (Ndebele Finance Manager and former employee of the ZANU-PF Ministry of Finance and the National Oil Company of Zimbabwe in the early 1980s).

⁶⁵⁶ Interview: RM2, Johannesburg, South Africa - 26/02/08 – (Shona NGO peace activist advocating for trauma healing and reconciliation among rural Matabeleland communities and survivors of Gukurahundi violence).

⁶⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁸ Honneth, A. 1995. *The Struggle for Recognition – The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press.

Honneth, these three modes of basic self-understanding can only be acquired and maintained through the concept of '*intersubjectivity*'. This notion of intersubjectivity comes out of the work by G.W.F. Hegel and George Herbert Mead and essentially involves the human interchange of mutual recognition. Honneth surmises that Marx would have used the term "*dignity*", Sorel the term "*honour*" and Fanon the term "*Recognition*" to describe this process of intersubjectivity.⁶⁵⁹

Intersubjective relationships, in Honneth's opinion, "go beyond (a) close relations of love and friendship to include (b) legally institutionalized relations of universal respect for the autonomy and dignity of persons and (c) networks of solidarity and shared values within which particular worth of individual members of a community can be acknowledged."⁶⁶⁰ These kinds of human relation interactions are not birthed in a social vacuum. They are created and developed in the crucible of "*social struggles, which cannot be understood exclusively as conflicts over interests*".⁶⁶¹ There is a moral logic for social conflicts. That logic understands that personal and corporate identity is constructed around the notions of mutual recognition and respect. When the drama of human disrespect is acted out in the forms of "*violation of body, denial of rights, and denigration of ways of life*"⁶⁶², then, resistance will surface. Resistance, whether expressed violently or non-violently is intimately linked with disrespect. In Honneth's words:

"The 'grammar' of such struggles is 'moral' in the sense that the feelings of outrage and indignation driving them are generated by the rejection of claims to recognition and thus imply normative judgments about the legitimacy of social arrangements. Thus the normative ideal of a just society is empirically confirmed by historical struggles for recognition."⁶⁶³

This 'politics of recognition' is probably no more better illustrated than in the controversies surrounding the representation of the late Dr. Joshua Nkomo and the symbolism of his persona both in life and death. More than any other historical figure in Zimbabwe's political landscape of liberation, Nkomo remains the most contested of leaders with all sides to the post-independence conflict factions claiming a piece of his

⁶⁵⁹ Ibid: 160-170.

⁶⁶⁰ Ibid: xi-xii.

⁶⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶⁶² Ibid: 131-139.

⁶⁶³ Ibid: xi-xxi.

legacy. The transcript paragraph below illuminates the transient nature of labels such as ‘dissident’ and ‘hero’ in the production of history, as Nkomo himself was at one time considered the chief of ‘dissidents’ by the ZANU-PF and at a later time the most valiant of ‘heroes’ by the same government.

“So heroism depends. This is actually how my last publication was, on the imagination of Mugabe and I was using the experiences of Joshua Nkomo. I was arguing that Joshua Nkomo represents something very interesting. You find during the Liberation Struggle from 1963, they were saying ‘no, this is a vacillating politician, he’s not committed to ZANU, he’s continuing to negotiate with Ian Smith up to 1976, and recently they said Nkomo was a heavy burden to Lancaster [Peace Negotiations]; ‘all that we agreed to in Lancaster was because of him’. Then in 1980 Nkomo campaigns as Father Zimbabwe, he then loses Elections, he is taunted not to call himself Father Zimbabwe and then lose the Elections, then the Gukurahundi is connected to destroy the Father Zimbabwe thing, then [in] 1987 Nkomo comes to the limelight cause he’s a good facilitator, he also swallowed his pride and all that for the sake of the nation and signed the Unity Accord. It turns, after his death when the pitch is taken even higher. Now he’s Hero of Heroes, founding Father of Nationalism. The title ‘Father of Zimbabwe’ is reinstated posthumously to him; he becomes indeed Father of Zimbabwe. So you can see three or five representations of the same person. And now with the National Galleries, Nkomo now will become a Saint or Spirit of the nation. The nation is now imaged around him but if you read back, this is a useless person...”⁶⁶⁴

In the psyche of the supporters of ZAPU, this kind of political metamorphosis whereby their leader is denigrated as a marginalised, political reprobate and then elevated as a decorated, national ‘saviour’ is not only bewildering, it is too much to bear. While the ZANU-PF attempt to describe their about face in this matter as a gesture of reconciliation and a sign of unity, the ZAPU faithful in Matabeleland perceive it as a disgrace to the memory and the person of Joshua Nkomo. Thus, the ZANU-PF demand for, and even manufacturing of *loyalty* at all costs has resulted in the exact opposite outcome. What the ZANU-PF claims was an act of goodwill by integrating Nkomo as a hero in the national narrative of Zimbabwe, many ZAPU followers see as a shameful act of *disloyalty* (yet another political sham of the ZANU-PF regime). In other words, the hypocrisy of this continual public *honour* afforded to Joshua Nkomo year after year since his death in 1999 is felt as *dishonourable* to his legacy.

⁶⁶⁴ Interview: SG1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 20/12/07 - (Ndebele Professor of Political Science, researcher and author).

“He [Nkomo] continued his dedicated support for the upliftment of the people till his untimely death in 1999. It is for his unwavering commitment to the cause of Zimbabwe that the late gallant Father of Zimbabwe was honoured with the Order of the Great Zimbabwe (Gold).”⁶⁶⁵

Another cogent example of this sense of private dishonour in what appeared to be a public honour is when the grandson of Joshua Nkomo recently won a national award in a poetry contest (2007) and was summoned to the State House to be given official recognition by ZANU-PF. However, the Nkomo family refused to attend this event presumably as a form of protest (a counter-narrative) to what they saw as political exploitation by a government whose image and integrity were in shatters and who desperately needed to capitalise on the prominent and populist national status evoked by the name of Dr. Joshua Nkomo; a person they (the ZANU-PF) had nothing but mockery and disdain for in the not so distant past.⁶⁶⁶

6.5. Voices from the Grave: Heroes, Dissidents and the Production of Memory

“Wars are often summed up as the decisions of leaders and the movements of armies. It is often forgotten that all of these depend on ordinary soldiers, who personally sacrifice to achieve advances and victories, and physically suffer the consequences of retreats and victories. But their experiences are usually obliterated in the manufacture of histories, and may even be lost to popular memory. The result is the propagation of an official mythology of war.”⁶⁶⁷

While Matabeleland was being ‘purged’ of its ‘dissidents’, the central government embarked on a parallel campaign of ‘*creating national heroes*.’ Elaborate ceremonies of pomp and circumstance, eulogies and trophies of respect and recognition were lavished upon all those who were cast into the role of a ‘national warrior’ icon. The unveiling of Heroes Acres, the final resting places of those who were elevated to this honourable status, became the public domain whereby this level of affirmation was immortalized. This effort represented another avenue for re-narrating history which was inherently symbolic in both its visual and verbal manifestations.

⁶⁶⁵ ‘Profiles of Zimbabwean Luminaries’, (2005) *The Chronicle – Silver Jubilee Supplement (Bulawayo)* 18 April.

⁶⁶⁶ Interview: BK1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 26/06/06 - (Ndebele ZAPU politician and professor in the 1980s who fled into exile from 1983-1985 after surviving several death attempts during the period of Gukurahundi violence).

⁶⁶⁷ Barnes, Teresa. 1995. *The Heroes Struggle: Life after the Liberation War for Four Ex-combatants in Zimbabwe*, in Bhebe, N. & Ranger T. (eds.) *Soldiers in Zimbabwe’s Liberation War*. London: James Curry, 118.

“Just take the issue here of the construction of Hero’s Acre, especially in Harare, it’s such a permanent structure. Black marble, you know. It’s there for good and it’s designed not just to provide this big burial ground for people. But I think it’s designed to become sort of etched in the minds of people that these people will be heroes, and they will be heroes for the rest of time irrespective of what they’ve done.”⁶⁶⁸

Norma J. Kriger described the two-pronged aim of this memorialisation project as follows: “...to foster a national identity through the discarding of colonial symbols and through attempts to establish their own heroes as national symbols.”⁶⁶⁹ In her reflections on the production of social memory, Pamela Machakanja describes how nations go about securing a corporate memory among their citizenry:

“To distinguish itself from outsiders, the group retrieves from its available past key memories that are perceived as essential to the construction of its identity – a process of inclusion as well as exclusion...One way of creating a dominant hegemonic memory is through the deliberate fabrication of memory through rituals, emblems, commemorative events, and monuments that signify symbolic and physical markings of the past.”⁶⁷⁰

Contrary to what the ruling elite expected, this endeavour turned out to be a highly contentious undertaking. In the first place, the White minority (who carried 15 seats in the Parliament) was finding it most difficult to let go of their historical memorials and thus often evoked the negotiated ‘reconciliation’ agreements (emanating from the Lancaster talks) to try to preserve their public symbols. However, what was quite surprising was the unexpected flurry of disagreement about what colonial symbols should, or should not be removed arising from the Black African communities. The most prominent case in point was the controversy between the central government and the Harare City Council over World War II Memorials. The All-Black Harare City Council considered these memorials as an offensive symbol of the oppressor. However, the central government refused to remove them insisting that they represented the world-wide fight against Fascism, which was a noble cause.⁶⁷¹

⁶⁶⁸ Interview: DC1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe - 13/09/07 (White Zimbabwean Human Rights Lawyer and politician).

⁶⁶⁹ Kriger, N. 1995. The Politics of Creating National Heroes: The Search for Political Legitimacy and National Identity, in Bhebe, N. & Ranger T. (eds.) *Soldiers in Zimbabwe’s Liberation War*. London: James Curry, 139.

⁶⁷⁰ Machakanja, P. 2008: 47.

⁶⁷¹ Kriger, N. 1995: 143.

Even more explosive was the second prong of this national identity building programme; that of the National Heroes Acre Monument and Cemetery located some seven kilometres outside of Harare which eventually expanded to provincial, regional and district Heroes Acres across the country. Research has shown that the primary motivating drive for acting out violent revenge is the need to “*honour the memory of the dead.*”⁶⁷² The following reflective script extracted from the field notes of this research exemplifies the human drive to honour the dead:

“We travelled with AN3 who shared some of his personal experience of Matabeleland violence. AN3 was from Tsholotsho, an area where severe massacres occurred during the 1980s. He said with a surname like [his] you really suffered, they lumped you together with the extended family of [this prominent name]. He had two brothers who had to flee the country at the time in question and two of them that eventually changed their names. One of his brothers went missing in Matabeleland over that time and the family has never seen him since. Sometimes AN3 even looks for his brother’s face in the crowds as he walks the city streets. He poignantly stated, ‘*We do not know if our brother is dead or alive because we have not buried any bones yet!*’”⁶⁷³

This basic, almost instinctual need, if not satisfied in a nonviolent manner, can fuel revenge cycles sometimes for generations. Like an unrequited appetite, if the nation’s beloved dead (especially those whose blood was spilt for the cause of freedom) are not respected, emotions can multiply into a debilitating bitterness and block the pivotal trauma healing required for collective liberation. Pamela Machakanja extrapolates on this ‘official’ (ZANU-PF) national process of remembering the dead in Zimbabwe:

“Political funerals symbolise the liberation memory and are enacted through rituals and revolutionary songs and dance that capture the spirit of the political struggle. They represent the cycle of heroic birth, life and death. Their culmination usually sees the war hero laid to rest at the national, provincial, or district shrine, depending on the deceased’s status. The death of a political hero also symbolises a lifetime of service and dedication to national duty. The funeral process functions as an emblem of association, dedication, sacrifice, allegiance, and enduring service to a common cause. The deceased becomes a representative of heroic sacrifice whose beliefs remained uncompromised even in situations of profound adversity. The political sacrifice of the deceased creates a model of

⁶⁷² Ignatieff, M. 1998. *The Warrior’s Honour – Ethnic War and the Modern Conscience*. Ontario: Viking - Published by Penguin Group, 188. “But revenge – morally considered – is a desire to keep faith with the dead, to honor their memory by taking up their cause where they left off.”

⁶⁷³ Unrecorded Interview: AN3, Mtshabezi, Zimbabwe – 27/06/06 (Ndebele male from Tsholotsho, Matabeleland, Church Youth Leader and primary survivor of Gukurahundi violence). See Field Notes dated 22-30 June 2006, p.3.

action. The story of suffering is woven into a celebration of a life of dedication. It is ultimately a story meant to inspire the younger generation with a call to arms and sacrifice.”⁶⁷⁴

In contrast to the above ‘sanitised’ version of Heroes Commemorations in Zimbabwe, the following respondent speaks candidly about his impressions of Independence Day celebrations from the perspective of a child with extended family in Matabeleland and the Midlands during the time of the Gukurahundi violence:

“And then what happens is, when we’re at the Heroes’ Acre on Independence Day or the two Heroes Days as we had two, there used to be lots and lots of dead bodies shown and there was a constant bombardment of how much sacrifice had gone into Zimbabwe’s Independence, how much blood had gone into Zimbabwe. Lots of songs even played on accompanying programmes like one called ‘The Nation’ where they talked about current affairs. And there was a very sad depressing wailing song written by one guy about all the blood that was spilt particularly by Rhodesian Forces... And over and over again you were shown scenes of people fighting, people dying, mass graves, I always had that same picture of Alsations being unleashed onto crowds of Black people who were just peacefully protesting. And it was basically made to seem as ‘Look, this is the final chapter of our Liberation, there are people who are ‘anti-our state’, ‘anti-our country’... I remember going to bed, literally afraid as a kid, that South Africa troops or the dissidents would invade Harare and come to my bedroom, and take us all over and kill us and butcher us like they did the children in Matabeleland. Because it’s very traumatic seeing children with axe-heads left in their skulls and thing like that, on TV. And yah, they always used to have a sign ‘Please note that this is not for sensitive viewers’, but they were not shy about showing the most grotesque detail of amputations.”⁶⁷⁵

Indeed, for many people (not just children, but also all those who had been traumatised by the Matabeleland violence), these official ZANU-PF ceremonies which were meant to ‘manufacture patriotic memory’ failed to produce loyal devotion to the country and its leadership. Instead these rituals of remembrance created fear, paranoia and a sense of re-victimisation.

Thus, while the Heroes Acre project was meant to enhance and bolster the national unity and patriotism, it seemed to serve the opposite intent. For Zimbabwe, with its internally ‘chequered’ liberation movement the problem arose when the ruling party attempted to categorise the dead as ‘heroes’ and ‘non-heroes’ according to its own

⁶⁷⁴ Machakanja, P. 2008: 58.

⁶⁷⁵ Interview: TM1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 01/11/07 – (Shona Businessman whose relative was a prominent leader in the ZANU-PF government).

partisan political narrative of the independence struggle. A barrage of questions began to flow among government, political parties and the masses; who was a hero and who was not? Who decides who was a Hero or who was not? Are some heroes more important than others? If so, what should be the criteria for determining this importance? Are heroes only the dead, or are heroes also the living? Not only were the answers demanded from these questions exceptionally difficult to agree on, but the actual decision-making structures and methods were under grave suspicion. In the words of Norma Kriger:

“The politics of choosing heroes has exposed the gap between the political rhetoric of equity, participation, and unity on the one hand, and the realities of an enormous disparity between party and government leaders and the masses, the leaders’ desire for control and their imposition of decisions on the population, and overtly partisan decision-making by ZANU(PF)...”⁶⁷⁶

Other interview respondents from this research agree with Kriger’s sentiments, putting into serious question the procedures employed to decide on the status of those who were ‘worthy’ of burial as national heroes, and those who were not:

“Buried nowadays [are] people who... it’s gonna be a mixture. Some of the older folk who are still alive who’ll pass away, but I think a lot of it is people Mugabe wants to profile. Mugabe has a choice though. *You know it’s almost like Mugabe is a king, and being buried in Heroes’ Acre is almost like a posthumous knighthood, and he’s the only one that can confer that knight[hood].* I’m sure they’ll argue that Central Committee is the one that chooses heroes but he has sway.”⁶⁷⁷

“Willie Musarurwa is a good example; an Ndebele, a ZAPU leader who was the editor of the Sunday Mail. He had been fired from the Sunday Mail for questioning the government on something, and he lived for seven years in obscurity. And when he died, he was declared a national hero. And then they gave a sanitized version and said ‘this is the official history and he is part of our narrative in this line’. *So being buried in Heroes Acre is kind of the ultimate cleansing, you know, stripping any figure of a history of questioning of ZANU-PF or Robert Mugabe* and instead taking him out of the area of controversy and saying ‘here, this is how a minor figure fit[s] in. This was his valid role, and anything else is just a dissident view of that person...of the role they played’.”⁶⁷⁸

⁶⁷⁶ Kriger, N. 1995: 140.

⁶⁷⁷ Interview: TM1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 01/11/07 – (Shona Businessman whose relative was a prominent leader in the ZANU-PF government).

⁶⁷⁸ Interview: AM1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 10/08/06 – (White American Journalist who lived in Zimbabwe from 1980 until he was deported by the ZANU-PF government).

When considering the accolades bestowed on those buried in the Heroes Acre, the above interview transcripts make fascinating analogies to that process resembling divine rituals (of knighthood and life-cleansing) both of which are irrevocable and eternal in nature. In this way, the ZANU-PF was successful in eliciting a response of holy reverence and awe from the masses who watched these political ‘worship’ rituals from the periphery; the ‘outer courts of the temple’.⁶⁷⁹

One of the more outstanding examples of this convoluted exercise in the declaration of ‘whose in and whose out’ was the thorny debate over the ‘hero’ status of Lt. Commander Lookout Masuku who died of ‘natural causes’⁶⁸⁰ in April of 1986. Masuku, the last Commander-in-Chief of the ZIPRA military structures was arrested and charged with treason (conspiring against the ZANU-PF) in relation to the arms caches that were found on ZIPRA-owned farms in March of 1982. He became gravely ill while being held for four years in detention without trial despite an acquittal by the highest court in the land. He was not granted hero status from the government of the day. This was considered an outrage by the former ZAPU leadership and loyal followers. In a highly charged emotional speech delivered to 20,000 people who attended Masuku’s funeral, Joshua Nkomo had these fierce words to say:

“If Lookout Masuku is not a hero, who then is a hero of this country?...We accused former colonizers who used detention without trial as well as torture and yet do exactly what they did, if not worse. We accused Whites of discrimination on grounds of colour yet we have discriminated on political and ethnic grounds.”⁶⁸¹

There are numerous other instances of this form of subjective designation of hero / non-hero in the cases of prominent liberation struggle leaders such as Canaan Banana

⁶⁷⁹ *The Holy Bible*. 1973. (New International Version). Grand Rapids: Zondervan Press. Map Index, 11. The analogy being used here is of the ancient Jewish Temple. Accordingly, this temple was built in such a way that it contained an inner sanctuary called the ‘holy of holies’, a place where the Alter stood and where only the attending High Priest could enter to perform sacrifices and cleansing rituals. From there a series of courts were built reserved for Jewish men, Jewish women and finally the outer courts for the Gentiles (the foreigners) in Israel.

⁶⁸⁰ The cause of Masuku’s death remains in question. The official cause of death was originally attributed to a ‘rare brain disease’ of which many ZAPU-ZIPRA supporters believe was a direct result of the torture and beatings (severe head injury) that he endured while in detention. However, in her recent memoirs entitled: “Through the Darkness” Judith Garfield Todd, who was a friend of the Masuku family and was with Lookout on his death bed, states that the cause of death was due to HIV/AIDS-related complications.

⁶⁸¹ Alexander, et al. 2000: 255.

(long-serving President of Zimbabwe) who was critical of the ZANU-PF government later in his life and at the time of his death, Ndabaningi Sithole (First President of ZANU) and a consistent voice of opposition to ZANU-PF after his ejection from the organisation, and James Chikerema (long-standing Vice President of ZAPU) who remained loyal to the ZAPU-ZIPRA alliance until he and Sithole joined forces with Bishop Abel Muzorewa in an internal settlement that smelled of compromise with the Smith regime and was rejected by both ZAPU and ZANU. The key point here being that all these liberation leaders were refused burial at the Heroes Acres because they disagreed with or engaged in what the leadership of the ZANU liberation movement considered treacherous activities.

However, there were also those figures whose families opposed or refused to allow their loved ones to be buried at Heroes Acre almost as a form of protest (a contrasting-narrative) to the contrived uniformity that the Heroes Acres represented. Accordingly, in her research on the assassination of Herbert Chitepo, Luise White uncovered evidence that Victoria, the wife of Chitepo was not in favour of her husband's body being buried in Heroes Acre:

“...Heroes Acres was to be the burial place for those whose ‘actions were guided by love and comradeship’ in ‘unwavering support’ for freedom and justice. Its construction was supposed to commemorate the end of violence and the end of exile for so many freedom fighters...A year later [1981], Chitepo’s remains were brought from Lusaka and buried there as well. Several friends of the family say that Victoria Chitepo, who had been elected to parliament from Manicaland and was appointed deputy minister of education and culture by Mugabe, was opposed to this. Some said she did not want her husband buried next to his murderers...”⁶⁸²

In a similar vein, Judith Garfield Todd refused the ZANU-PF's overture to have her parents (Garfield and Grace Todd) buried at Heroes Acre. Garfield Todd was a churchman and politician serving as Prime Minister of Rhodesia in the 1950s. His wife Grace, a teacher by profession was a tireless advocate for literacy and improved education systems for Blacks in Rhodesia and also the newly independent Zimbabwe. Garfield Todd was arguably more amiable toward the plight of the Black majority than any other Rhodesian leader. However, he was eventually kicked out of the white

⁶⁸² White, L. 2003. *The Assassination of Herbert Chitepo – Texts and Politics in Zimbabwe*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 92.

government and imprisoned along with his daughter Judy for their political activities and affiliations with the Black liberation cause. After their release in 1980, both Garfield and his daughter Judy became vocal critics of the ZANU-PF government.

“No, no, she refused [her parents to be buried at Heroes Acre]. They [ZANU-PF] asked Judy whether she, as the heir, whether she would permit it and she said no. So her mother and father, they’d already bought their grave plots and so on at the mission and they were buried there. And Judy hated that. She thought the mission had gone to the dogs.”⁶⁸³

In the aftermath of the Masuku debacle, the ZIPRA War Shrines Committee and the Mafela Trust were set up to function as care-taker structures to represent the ‘fallen heroes’ of ZAPU-ZIPRA in the Independence struggle. Following the formation of these organizations a combined (ZANU / ZAPU) National Liberation War Vets Association was launched in 1989 to advocate for the needs of all veterans in Zimbabwe at a national level, especially around the issues of promised compensation. This Association was instrumental in shifting the public debate from ‘*dead*’ heroes to ‘*living*’ heroes, which in essence, moved the national narrative discourse from issues of *honour* to issues of *accountability*. The Vets Association condemned the political elite who were now “...living in great luxury while the ‘forgotten fighters’ languished in poverty. [After all] who is not a war veteran? Civilians, youth and detainees, as well as guerrillas, had paid a high price during the liberation war: the wounds of war were inflicted on the nation as a whole.”⁶⁸⁴ As it turned out the government promises of compensation to war vets only came a full fifteen years after independence.

The concept of *accountability* is most clearly argued from two vantage points: Firstly, as a nationalist appeal to the basic human rights of its citizenry who suffered during the times of war. Secondly, it can be packaged in a more symbolic and traditionalist moral rhetoric of what Richard Werbner calls a “*moral partnership between the living and the dead, the breach of which requires ritual resolution.*”⁶⁸⁵ This ‘ritual resolution’ referred to by Werbner is mediated through what he terms, “*recountability* -

⁶⁸³ Interview: TR1, Oxford, UK – 21/10/08 – (White British professor, researcher and widely published author who is a leading authority on the history of Zimbabwe).

⁶⁸⁴ Alexander, et al. 2000: 256.

⁶⁸⁵ Werbner, R. 1995. Human Rights and Moral Knowledge - Arguments of Accountability in Zimbabwe, in Strathern, M. (ed.) *Shifting Contexts – Transformations in Anthropological Knowledge*. London: Routledge.

the right to make a citizen's memory known, and acknowledged in the public sphere."⁶⁸⁶

The ZANU-PF procedure of selective 'hero' identification was fraught with biased political manoeuvring and failed to give a platform to the contrasting narratives of 'recountability' in Zimbabwe, especially for those who suffered under the accusation of dissidence and those Matabeleland oppositional voices who were isolated as a result of the Gukurahundi violence. In failing to do this (surfacing the alternative scripts), the ZANU-PF regime reinforced its own prevailing narrative monologue once again. The following respondents give voice to the embittered silence embraced by those who have lost all faith in the national constructs of hero and dissident in Zimbabwe:

"So I think that one, a 'Heroes Acre' in Zimbabwe is a ZANU-PF cemetery. I really don't believe that they consider heroes because most of the heroes...so-called heroes, who are buried there, are ZANU-PF guys. PF-ZAPU guys, plenty of them who are not in Heroes' Acre. There are plenty people who did wonderful job in Zimbabwe; they are not there. There are even heroes in...musicians who are heroes, but they were not buried there, because they were expected by the ZANU-PF to support and sing for ZANU-PF. But they were entertaining Zimbabweans. 'All' Zimbabweans, they rated them as heroes. When they died, many Zimbabweans cried. So if someone died and many people cry, the whole country cr[ies]; that person is a hero. But most of them they are not there. *So it's a ZANU-PF cemetery and I don't consider it as Heroes' Acre*, I really don't consider it."⁶⁸⁷

"About the Heroes' Acre, it's just a joke. I mean it's something people have stopped taking it seriously. I mean it's well-known 'you must be a member of the ZANU-PF, Politburo, to be buried in Heroes Acre'. *People have just said 'well, it's just become another cemetery, there's no difference'*. I mean the way a hero is determined, is defined...in fact...It's now a matter of...if you were close to Robert Mugabe then you become a hero. *The problem in Zimbabwe is everything has been personalized. So if you sing praises to Robert Mugabe then you are a hero.* Like it really doesn't ... I think the problem of Zimbabwe is intolerance, you know, if you hold opposing views, then you are seen as the enemy that is the problem..."⁶⁸⁸

"To be laid at the Heroes' Acre, for instance, you have to be part of ZANU-PF. My whole idea of a hero [is that] there is no jacket that you should put on, that you are ZANU-PF, that you are PF-ZAPU. You know, like in a millionaire's

⁶⁸⁶ Werbner, R. 1998. Beyond Oblivion: Confronting Memory Crisis, in R. Werbner (ed.) *Memory and the Postcolony: African Anthropology and the Critique of Power*. London: Zed Books.

⁶⁸⁷ Interview: RM1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 14/09/06 – (Ndebele former security officer for opposition party and survivor of severe torture as a political prisoner under the ZANU-PF government).

⁶⁸⁸ Interview: DL1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 11/08/06 – (Ndebele Journalist employed as a business editor for a prominent newspaper).

house, there are some spoons that are made out of wood, some of gold, some of silver, but they all served all their purpose and they're all in the master's [house], *but in Zimbabwe it's different, you are a Hero only because you are in ZANU-PF.*"⁶⁸⁹

These interview transcripts illuminate a number of interesting counter-narratives to the dominant meta-narrative of the ZANU-PF. The first two respondents intentionally deflate the grandiose character of Heroes Acres by refusing to call it by name and instead comparing it to just any ordinary cemetery or graveyard. These narratives inadvertently deconstruct the mythology surrounding the ZANU-PF's chosen glories of heroism and thereby equalise all Zimbabweans who contributed to the independence of the country. In like manner, the last respondent makes use of the comparison of Zimbabwe as one household where there are many different instruments of practical use made from varying degrees of precious materials. His plea is that the diverse contributions that were made by Zimbabweans of all walks of life be recognised and afforded due credit in the preservation of historical memory for generations to come.

6.5.1. Voices from the Grave: Narratives of spiritual intrigue

Another narrative 'stream' that has been effectively exploited by both the ZANU-PF and the media (for different ends) is that of the mystical. Customary belief systems and themes of meta-physical magical powers⁶⁹⁰ have been utilised to shroud and sustain the ZANU-PF narrative since its inception. During the time of the Liberation Struggle the ZANU openly endorsed the consultation of spirit mediums (the most eminent one being Mbuya Nehanda) for guidance in war strategy and to appropriate super-natural power from the spirit realm.⁶⁹¹ Even in the current political climate, rumours abound surmising that Mugabe uses magic (muti) to maintain his health and to continually solidify his power.

Another example of this spiritual narrative world-view surfacing is in the mystery that has continually cast a shadow over the death of Josiah Tongogara, Minister of

⁶⁸⁹ Interview: SM1, Durban, South Africa – 07/03/07 – (Ndebele teacher, researcher and university lecturer).

⁶⁹⁰ In the southern African region the word '*muti*' is commonly used to refer to the rituals and the herbal medicines used by traditional diviners to practice witchcraft.

⁶⁹¹ Martin, D. & Johnson, P. 1981. *The Struggle for Zimbabwe*. Harare: Ravan Press, 50, 75, 77-78. For an inside look into a prominent African case study of war and spiritual intrigue featuring the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), see also Behrend, H. 1999. *Alice Lakwena & the Holy Spirits – War in Northern Uganda 1986-97*. Oxford: James Curry.

Defence in ZANU and the Chairperson of the High Command of the ZANLA military structures. In late December 1979, Tongogara was instantly killed when the vehicle he was travelling in collided with a FRELIMO truck in Mozambique. He was travelling to report to the ZANLA commanders on the conditions of the cease-fire agreement that was to end the hostilities and pave the way for independent Elections to occur in Zimbabwe. Many people do not believe that it was coincidental circumstances that killed him, and many have accused Mugabe through the ZANU of setting up this 'accidental death' out of selfish ambition in order to eliminate any opposition or competition to his own political leadership in the future. Tongogara was known to have strongly endorsed a unified ZANU-ZAPU political party with Nkomo as President to stand in the 1980 Elections:

"I also like to think that there was some element of greed. Because look at people who were advocating for unity, people like Tongogara; he died mysteriously, towards Independence. And it was Tongogara. *There is evidence to it that these people [ZANU-ZIPRA] had agreed to come back to Zimbabwe as a 'united' party and go to Elections as one 'united' party.* But, you know, Tongogara was a powerful man in that case, and he had worked with ZAPU and with ZIPRA. And the way I understand that history [is] that they had in principle agreed to work together, but because of greed, being power-hungry, some people felt that that was not the right approach to it because they were not going to get that limelight."⁶⁹²

"Now during the Lancaster House conference, a decision then was made, *Josiah Tongogara decided to make a decision that because he was head of the fighting Forces in ZANLA, it would be best if Joshua Nkomo led, you see. Now the combined group contest the election as one.* You know when the talks were taking place at Lancaster house, I was in England then. The Patriotic Front, ZANU and ZAPU were negotiating as the Patriotic Front, then Josiah Tongogara made it very clear, he had discussions with Joshua Nkomo to say that, 'I think the best way forward is to have you, Joshua Nkomo, lead us as we go to the elections'. Mugabe did not like that. So what he then did; as we are moving toward Elections, Josiah Tongogara was eliminated. He died. And therefore Mugabe was able to say 'we'll go to Elections as separate organizations, and then merge afterwards'. So therefore this is how Mugabe has always come to power."⁶⁹³

⁶⁹² Interview: SM1, Durban, South Africa – 07/03/07 – (Ndebele teacher, researcher and university lecturer).

⁶⁹³ Interview: FN1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 26/10/07 – (Ndebele Finance Manager and former employee of the ZANU-PF Ministry of Finance and the National Oil Company of Zimbabwe in the early 1980s).

“...It was because of him [Tongogara] that the war ended. Apparently again, hearsay, rumours, whatever, *the story goes that certain people would've wanted the war to continue, like at Lancaster House. And he said a flat 'No', and that I think was never ever forgiven.* As again folklore, otherwise a story, they were both sitting on opposite sides of the table at Lancaster House, Ian Smith and the Patriotic Front, and it was 'him' [Tongogara], who as they were bickering about certain things, got up, and walked across the room to Ian Smith and shook his hand. And apparently that changed the mood. Because people knew, by him doing that he was saying 'I want peace'. And, 'Whether you politicians are in it or not, I want peace. So you can't order my soldiers to go to war, unless I want war'. So in other words, Josiah Tongogara, my understanding was that he could talk to Mugabe and he would backchat. *If Robert Mugabe told him to do something, he was a military strategist and he would say 'Look, I'm sorry. We can't do this, our men's lives are in danger'. I think that was untenable which is why many people believe it wasn't an accident. It was just too convenient...*”⁶⁹⁴

In the early 1990s, rumours spread among the general population that the 'ghost' of Tongogara was sighted roaming around the Presidential palace (Mugabe's official residence). Many of the Zimbabwean citizenry believed that Tongogara's ghost was 'restless and unsettled' and was now haunting President Mugabe who needed to be held accountable for his (Tongogara's) untimely and unjust death. Even the media took up this story in the local and national newspapers in Zimbabwe at the time, not only because of the intrigue of 'ghosts' (which often sells newsprint) but even more interestingly as a way to continue to expose and in an indirect way protest against the systematic violence (both historically and currently) that ruled the operations of the ZANU-PF government. In the words of Luise White:

“The traces of that history where everywhere, including in idealizations of Chitepo and Tongogara. As topics of conversation and press conferences, and as ghosts, both men were portrayed as more heroic, more charismatic, and more judicious figures than they had ever been considered in their lifetimes. Chitepo and Tongogara have been reinvented as men who would have been president of independent Zimbabwe had they lived. The persistence of talk about Chitepo and of talk about visions of Tongogara literally left a trace of the idea of Mugabe's illegitimacy. This is not to say that Mugabe was accused of orchestrating the deaths of Chitepo and Tongogara, although such accusations were not uncommon. Chitepo and Tongogara come back, as it were, to show that the president is unlawfully in his office.”⁶⁹⁵

⁶⁹⁴ Interview: TM1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 01/11/07 – (Shona Businessman whose relative is a prominent leader in the ZANU-PF government).

⁶⁹⁵ White, L. 2003: 96-97.

One might be tempted to easily brush aside this tale of ‘haunts’ but whether one believes in the paranormal or not, this discourse of spiritual intrigue gave creative rise to a mass-based script of moral outrage at the repressive tactics of the ruling party and it gave platform to a stringent indictment by ordinary people opposed to what they believed was Mugabe’s illicit grip on power. *Thus, the monolithic narrative of the ZANU-PF that attempted to define political loyalty and disloyalty was once again re-scripted by the subjugated narratives of people-on-the-ground who had charted an entirely different subset of layered loyalties outside of the parameters prescribed by the ruling elite.*

6.6. National Imagination and the Existence of Dissidents

This study argues that in the schema of the ZANU-PF meta-narrative, to be declared a ‘dissident’ is to be equated to being ‘mutinous’, a person who has abandoned the Liberation Struggle. Thus, the justification for the severe violence unleashed on Matabeleland and Midlands in the early 1980s partially hangs on proof of the *reality* or *imagination* of the ‘dissident’ threat. The conception of ‘imagination’ being used here is not in reference to illusion or fantasy. Instead, in the phraseology of Catholic Theologian William Cavanaugh it is:

“...not imaginary, in the sense of being unreal, but rather are ways of seeing and narrating the world that are integral to ways of acting in the world... gathering information is only part – maybe even a small part – of the story behind the use of torture by the modern state. What is the rest of the story? The rest of the story has to do, I think, with fostering a certain kind of collective imagination. One significant part of that imagination is fear.”⁶⁹⁶

In this research, certain pathways of ideas emerged that were frequently clustered together in narrative ‘streams’ that swirled around the controversy of the *existence* of the ‘dissidents’. These bundled narratives embraced by distinct communities representing differing national interests, exhibit themselves in a clash of *imaginations*. Both the ZANU and ZAPU created an elaborate sense of being separate ‘*imagined communities*’ each constructed around similar themes of: ideological essentialism, lived experience of

⁶⁹⁶ Cavanaugh, W. 2006: 6 & 10.

violence, shared victimisation and external populist rhetoric and material support from the international community.⁶⁹⁷

A majority of the research interviews followed certain threads of reasoning (trying to prove or disprove the operations of the ‘dissidents’). At the same time, there also emerged a thoughtful third-voice that seemed to indicate that the issue is not whether or not the ‘dissidents’ existed, but rather *why* they existed. This strain of narrative takes great pains to explain and justify the motivation of the ‘dissidents’ so as to exonerate them and vindicate their cause. What is critical to explore here is a pattern of clustering that has emerged from the interviews and document analysis that twins together certain dissident narratives with corresponding narratives of how the Zimbabwe conflict will best be resolved in the long-term (refer to Diagram 3, page 50). If this clustering is indeed occurring in what appears to be a considerably predictable manner, the ramifications for a sustainable peace in Zimbabwe are myriad. The implications of these various future projections for peace will be discussed in more detail in the final Chapter of this thesis.

6.6.1. Official Narrative: A National security threat to the ZANU-PF

This hard-liner cluster subscribes to the official narrative that the ‘dissidents’ posed a real and dangerous threat to the stability of the State. These people embrace the notion that the ‘dissidents’ had an organised strategy to overthrow the newly independent Zimbabwe state and they often justify the casualties as a matter of national security.

“So then, the information that was being sent out to the public was that there has been a rebellion by a certain section of the population in a particular section of the country, which has been Matabeleland, *who were trying to forfeit or who was trying to overthrow the government of the day; the legitimately elected government of the day*. That was the information that was even being put across, and the government had taken the necessary steps to ‘quash’ such kind of rebellion, and to prevent the overthrow of the legitimately elected government. This was the information, you know, that was being put across throughout the media and that was being hammered and emphasized by the government.”⁶⁹⁸

For the proponents of this view (mostly ZANU-PF loyalists and many Shona-speaking civilians), the Gukurahundi massacres were a necessary evil, a regrettable result of war,

⁶⁹⁷ For two critical works on the socio-political dimensions of collective imagination see: Anderson, B. 1983. *Imagined Communities*. London / New York: Verso (historical reflections on the origins and spread of Nationalism), and Lederach, J. 2005. *The Moral Imagination*. Oxford: Oxford University Press (imaginations of conflict & peace).

⁶⁹⁸ Interview: SD1, Johannesburg, South Africa - 18/08/06 – (Shona Human Rights Lawyer).

even hinting at the idea that the ZANU-PF security forces were deployed in order to protect innocent lives:

“From what they [ZANU-PF] said..., it was basically that, you know, dissidents were out in Matabeleland *and so they were out to protect the people of Matabeleland from the dissidents, and of course to try and get rid of the dissidents.* I think that’s what was coming out. And talking to people that were in Mashonaland and also had that understanding that there was a group of dissidents out there and they were a menace and they were causing havoc, so the government had to intervene.”⁶⁹⁹

For the most part, this group believes that the estimated numbers of civilians killed have been inflated and that this is more about the Ndebele/ZAPU people ‘eating sour grapes’ because of their loss in the Election polls of 1980. For these people, the ZANU-PF does not need to apologise for this historical tragedy as it was a result of ‘being at war’. *In their minds, the Matabeleland people should find ways to ‘heal themselves’ and just ‘get over’ this difficult chapter of trauma in their past.*⁷⁰⁰

6.6.2. Oppositional Narrative: To ‘wipe-out’ support base of ZAPU

This moderate cluster consists of those who believe there were ‘dissidents’, but that they were few in number and did not pose a serious security threat to the State. For these persons (both Ndebele and Shona), and often the more educated, middle-class professionals or academics, the Gukurahundi massacres were less about an actual state security, and more about the ZANU-PF’s intention to totally ‘wipe-out’ all political opposition by destroying the opposition’s power base, which meant the people who support them.

“Because it was to me, *as I analyse it, it wasn’t so much the issue of the ‘dissidents’, but the issue of crushing a vibrant, well-organised Opposition party.* And how it was done; it was by destroying the middle-class leadership of that party, so that at the end of the day the top, once it fell off because [of] wear and tear and death and the like things, there won’t be any replacement from the middle group because the middle group was no longer there. The Provincial leadership could have had a few Central leaders killed, and then sometimes you’ll have Branch leaders also being killed. So that way, these who are right at the

⁶⁹⁹ Interview: DN3, Johannesburg, South Africa – 30/10/07 – (Ndebele NGO peace worker facilitating trauma healing and reconciliation among rural Matabeleland communities and survivors of Gukurahundi violence).

⁷⁰⁰ Unrecorded Interview: EN1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe - 26/06/06 (Prominent Ndebele politician who carried a number of high ministerial portfolios in the ZANU-PF government during the 1980s). The phrase ‘heal themselves’ is a verbatim quote from EN1. See Field Notes dated 22-30 June 2006, pgs. 1-3.

bottom, the unit members, could not easily jump from [the] unit into getting to the Province without the training. That, I'm sure they achieved because from there henceforth, Matabeleland, in the leadership arena hasn't come of age since that time."⁷⁰¹

"Subdue them through fear and also you know, *a very deliberate annihilation of ZAPU's political structures in those areas*, you know. We've got numerous reports, especially in Tsholotsho, of the Central Intelligence Officers and the Fifth Brigade arriving at 'calls' with lists of ZAPU office bearers and literally saying 'Joel, out you come' (finger snap) boom; very clear, well organised strategy of annihilating people."⁷⁰²

This supposition (to wipe-out the opposition's political base) is supported by the ZANU-PF's historic alliance with Maoist ideology (a cultural revolution through the purging and re-educating of the peasant masses). This grouping works very hard to prove the small number of actual 'dissidents' identified, and the clear lack of any co-ordinated military plan for overthrowing the government. For this group, the solution to this conflict lies in the formation of government-sanctioned instrumentalities such as a *National Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, and the structural reorganisation of the governance system into a *federalist form of government* that would divulge power to Matabeleland as a region affording it considerably more autonomy than it currently has to govern itself.

6.6.3. Rural Masses Narrative: Ndebele ethnic-cleansing (genocide)

This extremist cluster promulgates the conviction that the 'dissidents' did not exist at all. For those who subscribe to this belief, the Gukurahundi massacres were strictly an ethnic-cleansing exercise (genocide) based on historical divisions of hatred between the Ndebele and the Shona peoples. For this sector, the incongruence of the size and scope of the so-called 'dissident' threat and the toll from the heavy-handed violent response of the Fifth Brigade on the civilian population are not only incomparable, but also incomprehensible.

⁷⁰¹ Interview: JN1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 29/03/07 – (Ndebele teacher and activist working for the Catholic Commission on Peace and Justice CCJP in the 1980s).

⁷⁰² Interview: DC1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe - 13/09/07 (White Zimbabwean Human Rights Lawyer and politician).

“...I think it was very clear that they were out there to wipe out people. You remember, Enos Nkala came out in the press, saying that the government was sending out, I can’t remember the terms he used but, as if ‘a swarm of bees’ to go out there and he’ll deal with people. That’s the time when he actually said he really wishes he was not Ndebele; if he could wash it off, he would do it. In other words, he was saying ‘Ndebeles are not a people, to live’, as it were. And no wonder then that this Army would go out and then simply butcher people. Because I would say he was expressing government mind, he was the Minister of Defence then. And to hear those statements and then to see what was happening on the ground, I don’t think there was any explanation that could actually say that the government was thinking otherwise. *‘Ndebeles were people to be exterminated’* in my view.”⁷⁰³

“Up to this very time, you know I don’t feel that the people of Matabeleland have really accepted what was done to them because they felt it was a blunt thing by the ZANU-PF government. *They are seeing it as revenge; maybe from the past event when Lobengula [Ndebele King] also killed their people.* And they thought ‘this situation just came and was an opportunity for ZANU-PF to come then and kill people in Matabeleland, because thousands and thousands of people were killed. So much [so] that up to now, people are still going through a lot of pain...Because what really appeared was; it was only the ordinary people who were not armed, that suffered most.”⁷⁰⁴

“My arms were broken by the Fifth Brigade. There were no dissidents. The main reason why he [Mugabe] said there was dissidents is because there was enmity between him [Mugabe] and Joshua Nkomo. Both of my arms were broken, even [on] my head...I have some scars (MS1 pulls up his trousers and shows his scars). I have some bruises all over my body and they were broken, I was in pieces. Some of these were caused by the bayonet that they used to bayonet my body. *The excuse that they are using that there are dissidents that they are looking for at Matabeleland...they didn’t exist.*”⁷⁰⁵

This grouping (mainly Ndebele) mostly comprises of less educated ‘grass-roots’ rural communities that have little access to information about Gukurahundi except for the violence that they experienced as primary and secondary victims at the hands of the Fifth Brigade. The deduction that Gukurahundi was an exercise in ethnic-cleansing (even

⁷⁰³ Interview: DN1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 29/03/07 – (Ndebele Church Leader whose father was killed by 5th Brigade soldiers in 1984).

⁷⁰⁴ Interview: CM2, Kitwe, Zambia – 09/05/07 - (Ndebele teacher and community development worker with Orphans and Vulnerable Children, former Political Activist and Youth Leader for ZAPU in the early 1980s).

⁷⁰⁵ Interview: MS1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 11/09/07 - (Ndebele male, rural farmer from Tsholotsho, Matabeleland and primary survivor of Gukurahundi violence).

genocide) is quite understandable when one realises that the Fifth Brigade consisted of mostly Shona-speaking soldiers who were directly accountable to the office of the Prime Minister and who were mandated to utilise the lethal combination of both severe state-sanctioned violence and ethnic ‘hate-speech’ as virulent tools of oppression. More than not, *these adherents insist that the only solution to this conflict is through secession; to have an independent, self-governing Ndebele nation-state.*

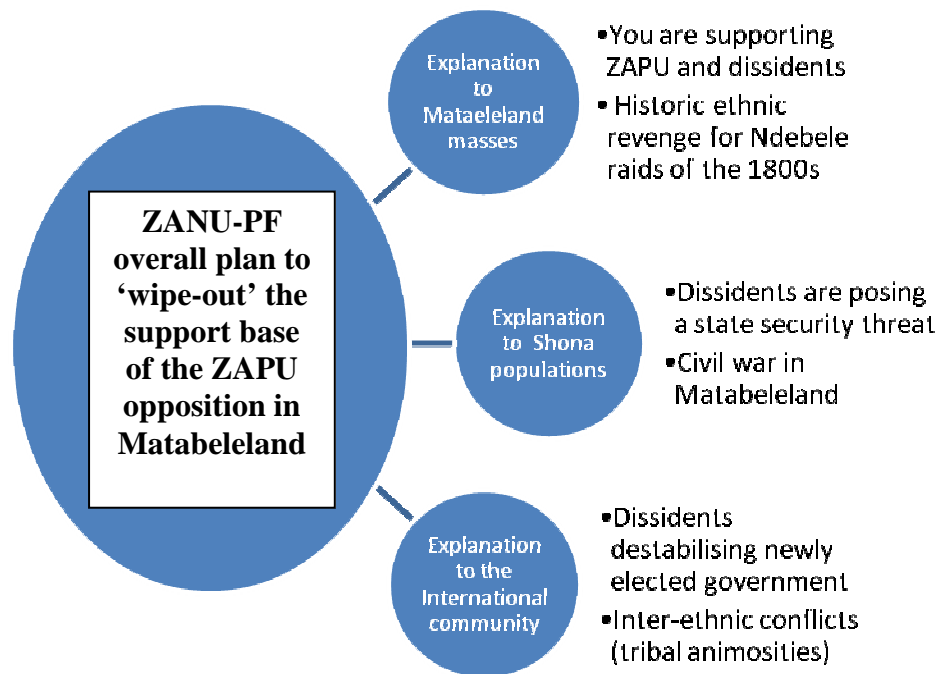
Diagram 3: Clustered Narratives - The Existence of Dissidents and Future Peace

Stakeholder Group:	Existence of Dissidents:	Explanation of Violence:	Future Solution for Peace:
1. ZANU-PF Government and Loyal Followers	Dissidents did exist in sizeable numbers to pose a security threat to the nation	To ‘protect’ the Matabeleland people and ‘eliminate’ the dissidents who intended to overthrow the newly elected ZANU-PF government	The victims of Matabeleland need to ‘heal themselves’ and forgive as the trauma they experienced was the regrettable, but inevitable outcome of war
2. ZAPU Opposition and Loyal Followers	Dissidents did exist but were few in number and did not possess any coordinated strategy to overthrow the ZANU-PF government	ZANU-PF was looking for an opportunity to ‘legitimately’ wipe-out the support base of ZAPU as their political opposition and thereby establish a one-party state	Zimbabwean government would need to set up a Truth Commission and reorganise its government structures into a federalist system giving Matabeleland more autonomy to rule itself
3. Rural Masses in Matabeleland	The dissidents did not exist at all. They were manufactured by the ZANU-PF government and its security forces.	It was ethnic-cleansing (genocide) – The Shona through the ZANU-PF were looking for an excuse to revenge the historical killings and raiding by the Ndebele against the Shona peoples in the late 1890s	The only way the people of Matabeleland can live in peace is if they are afforded the opportunity to secede from Zimbabwe and form their own Ndebele nation.

In essence, it is the conviction of this research that the actual plot of the ZANU-PF was to ‘wipe-out’ the support base of its opposition, the ZAPU. The evidence is slim surrounding the ZANU-PF claim that the dissidents posed a national state security threat. Likewise, while there is definite proof of massacres (mass killings), the counter claim of genocide or ethnic-cleansing by many Matabeleland citizens is hard to authenticate. The ZANU-PF had to account for the Matabeleland violence to at least three audiences; the international community, the citizens of Mashonaland, and the Matabeleland populace. Knowing full well that neither the international nor the Mashona communities would accept the notion of using violence to wipe-out one’s political opposition, the ZANU-PF had to manufacture the ‘dissident’ narrative discourse to explain the Matabeleland massacres. For the Matabeleland masses, the ZANU-PF hid behind these narratives of dissidence and then added the ethnic-conflict discourse which produced the necessary confusion, fear and terror to silence and subjugate the civilian population. Finally, for the international community, eager to play a non-interventionist role in post-colonial African affairs, the explanations of dissidents and historic ethnic animosities satisfied any questions they may have had about the violence occurring in Matabeleland. *Thus, the ZANU-PF was able to hide its motivations to eliminate the opposition by constructing multiple narratives which served as the covering for its violence in Matabeleland.*

Diagram 4 below provides a visual for this process.

Diagram 4: Covering Narratives used by the ZANU-PF in order to hide the Matabeleland Violence



6.7. Conclusion

The narratives of loyalty propagated by the ZANU-PF were particularly poignant in that they failed to differentiate the *individual* narrative from the *plural* narratives. In so doing, the private trajectories of particular actors (in this case primarily the politicians, soldiers and civilians in the liberation movement) were lost to the public, generalised story of independence and subsequent nationalism. Thus, the nuanced loyalties and motivational intricacies from which key players acted out the liberation drama were glossed over, neatly packaged into uniform political ideologies and smothered by national patriotic scripts. Professor Luise White articulates this concern well:

“First, historians of Zimbabwe have to abandon the either/or paradigm in which either the liberation forces or the Smith regime are the casual agents of every deed and action during the war...Second, historians of Zimbabwe – like those of the rest of Africa – need to look outside the frame they’ve set for themselves, and shift the history of war and violence beyond their interrogations of nationalism. If war and violence can be uncoupled from the history of nationalism and its

triumphs, it can have its own history, a history of guerrillas instead of a history of guerrilla struggle.”⁷⁰⁶

The aim of this chapter was to *disentangle* the individual narratives of personal loyalties from the collective narratives of national loyalties and thereby ‘*thicken the plot*’ of the historic Matabeleland violence.

The first section of this chapter opened with an exploration of the use of systematic violence by powerful states to invent the ‘enemy’ (where one does not exist) in order to justify their illegitimate rule. It highlighted the performance violence of dissident soldiers across all the political divides thereby undermining the commonly held belief that it was only ex-ZIPRA soldiers who were causing the dissidence. In the second section, a layered discussion on the actual size and scope of the dissident operations and the prominent explanations for their existence was presented with a strong emphasis being placed on the proposition that the so-called ‘dissidents’ were a ‘manufactured insurgency’. This theory is supported by direct evidence of both a systematic purging of ex-ZIPRA soldiers from the Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA) and the ZANU-PF security forces playing the role of soldier-by-day and dissident-by-night. In the third section, the reader was exposed to the dehumanising effect of narratives of revolutionary disloyalty. Narrative accusations of disloyalty are closely connected to the ‘stripping’ away of a person’s identity (label of dissident), ideology (social exclusion) and history (a forgetting of the past). In section four, the ‘politics of recognition’ was unpacked and applied to the conflict context of the ‘dissident’ movement in Matabeleland. The dissidents are characterised as ‘marginalised belligerents left out of the conversation’ and hence their dissidence served a performative function demanding that they be written into the national narrative of liberation (also referred to as ‘scripts of belonging’). Section five spoke of the role of memorialisation and the production of patriotic memory employed by the ZANU-PF to enforce a monolithic national loyalty. Special emphasis is given to the counter-narratives (including those of spiritual intrigue) that have been surfaced by communities of resistance in protest to this demand for uniform loyalty. Finally, the chapter closed by delving into the national imagination of the existence of dissidents. Of particular interest here is a set of narrative patterns (clusters) that have emerged that seem

⁷⁰⁶ White, L. 2003: 36.

to suggest a correlation between one's belief in the existence or non-existence of dissidents and prospects of solving this historic conflict and building a hope for peaceful co-existence in the future of Zimbabwe as a nation.

Chapter 7: Legitimacy – Narratives of Discipline and Protest

*“I have got hammers to knock off their heads. These dissidents should know that I am all out to crush them. If it means fist fighting, I know how to use my fists. If it is knobkerries, I also know how to use them. And if it comes to guns, I have too many of them. We have one national army, one government, and one Prime Minister – not two.”*⁷⁰⁷

7.1. Introduction: Intersecting Narratives of Legitimacy and Violence

Narratives of legitimacy inhabit at least four different spaces of meaning. The most concrete of these spaces is encompassed in *legal* boundaries; that which is legally compliant is legitimate. A second and less rigid translation of legitimacy would be that which is in accordance to accepted external ‘*standards*’; a quantitative comparison to outside criteria that bear common characteristics and values to that which is being evaluated. A third lens, and the most qualitative and broad, through which to explain legitimacy is that which is *reasonable*; the sort of common sense approach that assumes a shared social wisdom. Finally, legitimacy can also refer to that which is *authentic*; in essence an original or genuine article by its very nature.⁷⁰⁸

The ZANU-PF leadership has utilised all these interpretations of legitimacy in order to explain their authority and justify their application of violence in Matabeleland during the early 1980s. While the ZANU-PF appropriated legal authority by means of being a majority elected government and appealed to political authority by their revolutionary credentials, this study reveals that they not only perpetrated gross human rights violations that were outside the parameters of their own constitutional law and international political-legal standards, but they also publicly articulated their intention to do so on numerous occasions. Even the ZANU-PF claim that their violent offensive in the Matabeleland region was a ‘reasonable’ response to the security threat posed by the ‘dissidents’ was met with question among international actors who dared to speak out at that time. In an open letter to President Mugabe in 1997, Amnesty International put forward their concerns as follows:

“Nevertheless, the systematic detention, torture, killing and ‘disappearance’ of thousands of people in Matabeleland and Midlands during that period in history

⁷⁰⁷ ‘Ruthless War on Rebels Promised’, (1981) *The Herald (Harare)*, 26 October. Excerpt from a speech given by Robert Mugabe at a rally in Gwanda.

⁷⁰⁸ Davies, P. (ed.) 1976. *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*. New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 404.

still need to be addressed, because the massive human rights violations that took place at that time remain unexamined, undiscussed and therefore unresolved.”⁷⁰⁹

Despite placing themselves under the legitimacy banner of being an authentic liberation movement, ZANU-PF failed to win the trust of significant segments of the Matabeleland population as evidenced by the strong showing of ZAPU in that region both in the 1980 and 1985 Elections.

Thus, after resuscitating its version of an historical ethnic-conflict (Chapter 4), imposing its meta-narrative version of a nationalist order (Chapter 5), and interrogating the loyalty of the Zimbabwean public (Chapter 6), the ZANU-PF government still faced a legitimacy crisis, especially in light of the tenacious ‘dissident’ resistance that continued to surface in the Matabeleland region. The ZANU-PF leadership then turned its attention to damage control around its public image and its legitimacy as the ruling political party. In consistent revolutionary style, ZANU-PF fashioned its legitimacy narrative in connection with the language of violence and the system that shrouds it. For the ZANU-PF, infusing the concept of legitimacy with violence was of paramount importance for political survival. Clearly, political legitimacy has many sources. However, in the case of the ruling ZANU-PF government in Zimbabwe, most researchers and scholars would agree that violence and legitimacy have been consistently articulated and coupled together as mutually compatible processes that the ZANU-PF leadership felt should be collectively embraced by the nation-state and its citizenry.

Indeed, both ZANU and ZAPU embraced narratives of *revolutionary* violence as the only option for social change in the colonial era of Rhodesia. These narratives were heavily influenced by the socialist-communist ‘scripts’ of the Soviet Union, China and later North Korea. By the time of Independence, most if not all the necessary attributes of the ‘violence system’ mind-set and its component parts were well established and endorsed by both ZAPU and ZANU and their leadership. The key elements of the violence grid-system could be summarised as follows:

- Violent acts are seen as part of a larger "domination system"; a world-view of violence.

⁷⁰⁹ Sane, P. 1997. *Zimbabwe - Open letter from Amnesty International to His Excellency the President Robert Mugabe*. Retrieved from the web 4/12/2007.
<http://web.amnesnty.org/library/Index/ENGAFR460021997>

- The violence system maintains that human beings are essentially violent, and that violence is inevitable.
- The violence system manifests itself in a series of interlocking war zones.
- The violence system heralds violence as the solution and as a means of human fulfilment.
- The violence system objectifies (alienates) and separates (isolates) human beings using a 'Divide and Conquer' tactic.
- The violence system continually legitimates new acts of dominance and violence.
- The spiral of violence is propelled by the 'violence scripts' (language of hatred and revenge) used by individuals and by society at large and under-girded by myths of 'chosen traumas' and 'chosen glories'.⁷¹⁰

The violence system described above was entrenched by the white colonial rule in Rhodesia resulting in international vilification at the time which in turn, conferred certain integrity on the rightful cause of the black struggle. However, the moral and ethical value of counter-violence and the subsequent imposition of yet another violence system (whether black-led or not) as a justifiable revolutionary response remained a debatable topic. Curiously, some sources report that during his study years at Fort Hare University (1949-1953) in South Africa, Robert Mugabe was most interested by Mahatma Gandhi's work as a non-violent revolutionary. Martin Meredith describes Mugabe's intrigue:

“But the most important influence on him [Mugabe] at the time, he said, was Mahatma Gandhi, whose passive resistance campaign against British rule in India had fired the imagination of many young African nationalists. ‘This gave me personally a new kind of vision, a new philosophy, that if Africans were united in the same way as the Indians were, even if they resorted to a non-violent struggle, they would eventually emerge victorious.’”⁷¹¹

What is particularly curious about this quotation, aside from the ironic affiliation between Mugabe who flaunted violence and Gandhi who epitomised nonviolence, is the conditionality of the words ‘*even if they resorted to a non-violent struggle...*’. This grammatical clause can only be interpreted in one of three ways, either Mugabe did not believe that non-violence was an appropriate instrument of change in the African context, or he did not value non-violence as a means of metamorphosis, or he considered it too slow, too cumbersome an engagement for the purposes of accomplishing the change

⁷¹⁰ Butigan, K. & Bruno, P. 1999. *From Violence to Wholeness*. California: Pace e Bene Franciscan Nonviolence Centre, 28-30.

⁷¹¹ Meredith, M. 2008. *Robert Mugabe: Power, Plunder, and the Struggle for Zimbabwe*. Johannesburg & Cape Town: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 22-23.

desired in an abbreviated amount of time. Nonetheless, in the years that followed his time of study, whatever transpired in the mind and experience of Robert Mugabe and the ZANU-PF leadership, the machinery of violence became deeply ingrained as the most legitimate force for socio-political transformation.

The official stance of the ZANU-PF government in its employment of violence as an instrument of political policy has evolved over time. Coming out of the Lancaster House Peace Agreement and into the early stages of independence, the ZANU-PF articulated a defensive attitude toward their application of violence. During this time, the use of violence was described as a regrettable, but *necessary* evil which represented an inevitable requirement to solidify the total independence of the country, and the threat of violence was primarily aimed at what the ZANU-PF perceived as cross-border enemies. The *Chronicle* newspaper reported Mugabe's position as follows:

“The Zimbabwe National Army needs ‘sharpening’ to repulse South Africa’s continued acts of aggression against Zimbabwe’s Independence, the Prime Minister, Cde Mugabe said yesterday. Speaking during a Five Brigade tank squadron demonstration, Cde Mugabe said the army should be strengthened in terms of training and equipment if it was to counter the Pretoria regime’s current threats of sabotage against Zimbabwe. ‘We must improve the capability of the army and its equipment so that we can prepare to defend ourselves against South Africa,’ he said.”⁷¹²

From the view on the ground, one interview respondent couched this hyper-arousal surrounding the external threat of military invasion (whether by South Africa or the dissidents) as the feeling of a country perpetually under siege:

“So right from the word go you were taught...the fact that life is a Class struggle and in Zimbabwe it was a Class struggle. We were fighting against oppression of the colonialist. And it was always repeated, every year it was repeated, on the news it was repeated. And it was always this thing of this monster that was waiting to attack in the form of dissidents, *and you needed Mugabe to save you.*”⁷¹³

However, after the surfacing of the ‘dissident’ activity, ZANU-PF campaigned for the use of offensive violence as the only *constructive* means by which to quickly eliminate any armed insurgency and to protect and ensure the continuity of the Liberation

⁷¹² ‘Army must be sharper – PM’, (1983) *The Chronicle* (Bulawayo) 22 March.

⁷¹³ Interview: TM1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 01/11/07 – (Shona Businessman whose relative is a prominent leader in the ZANU-PF government).

Cause against internal threat of government overthrow. In the words of the late Edgar Tekere, ZANU-PF Minister of Manpower in the early 1980s: “Nkomo and his guerrillas are germs in the country’s wounds and they will have to be cleaned up with iodine. The patient will have to scream a bit.”⁷¹⁴ Reporting on public statements made by the Minister of State Security, Emmerson Munangagwa the *Chronicle* newspaper printed the following: “Likening the dissidents to cockroaches and bugs, the minister said the bandit menace had reached such epidemic proportion that the Government had to bring in ‘DDT’ (Five Brigade) to get rid of the bandits.”⁷¹⁵ These scripts are exploiting common English idioms reflecting on the hardships of life such as: ‘No pain; no gain,’ or ‘this is going to hurt, but it is ultimately for your own good.’ This progression from violence as ‘necessary’, to violence as ‘constructive’ marked a subtle shift in the ZANU-PF government’s ideological outworking whereby the system of *state-sanctioned* violence as a legitimate means of control replaced the historic *revolutionary* violence as a legitimate means for social change in Zimbabwe.

When it became apparent that the cessation of ‘dissident’ insurgency was not forthcoming and the strength of the ZAPU opposition was increasing not decreasing, the ZANU-PF endorsed violence as the only *legitimate* means by which to secure and maintain its strangulating grip on political power. The universal rhetoric of the violence system as discussed in this section is not new, it is only recycled from context to context. For purposes of this study, the research interest has focused on the dynamics surrounding the implosion of the violence system, or in other words, when the violence system turns on itself. In the case of Zimbabwe, when the violence energy was focused on an outward enemy (the white Rhodesian regime) it could maintain a certain degree of ‘justifiable’ coherency. However, when the violence was turned inwards to its own members (ZAPU as a parallel Black liberation movement), it became exceptionally destructive and consequentially was perceived *and* experienced as illegitimate. The transcripts below, taken from letters written by ZAPU political prisoners who were incarcerated by the ZANU-PF in the early 1980s, speak to this painful irony with startling honesty:

⁷¹⁴ Meredith, 2008: 60.

⁷¹⁵ ‘Harassment of civilians not our style’, (1983) *The Chronicle* (Bulawayo) 05 March.

“Imprisonment under the ZANU-PF was horrible – much worse than under Smith, but we survived just because we knew that the State was trying to break us and we wouldn’t accept that.”⁷¹⁶

“The torture and ill-treatment that I received during the Smith regime was nothing compared to the torture and humiliation I suffered under a black regime. But I was angry, not disappointed, at the gross violations of human rights, because I never expected anything better from this government.”⁷¹⁷

“We fought relentlessly against white minority rule out of conviction that a black government would better appreciate the dignity of the black majority. The moral blameworthiness of a black government that dehumanises its own people is worse than that of a white minority government. In the case of the former the sense of betrayal is complete.”⁷¹⁸

From these passages, the reader gets the sense that the quantitative material conditions of imprisonment under the white versus the black regimes were really not the issue (although they may have differed). The real offense articulated in these writings is a qualitative disparity best described by the last author as the ‘complete’ indignity and betrayal of being dehumanised by one’s own kind.

Herein lays the disastrous consequences of the Matabeleland conflict. For no matter how hard the ZANU-PF tried, and continues to try to maintain its violence narrative to explain and validate the atrocities committed against the Matabele people, their narrative does not stand the test of time. The violence system is inherently unjust. When the violence system implodes on itself, it turns its own furious wake inward. When this occurs the violence system is exposed, weakened and opened to a process of questioning and dismantling. Unable to deal with this state of vulnerability, the violence system produced by the ZANU-PF immediately closed rank, choked out all space for dialogue and resumed its monologue while at the same time threatening all who would dare to question its legitimacy ‘script.’ Instead of embracing flexibility and taking on the risk of political adaptation, as difficult as it might have been, the ZANU-PF decided to move into a comfortable state of denial, inertia and ‘group-think’. In sum, after Independence the ZANU-PF government stance in relation to violence progressed from

⁷¹⁶ Bould, G. (ed.) 1991. *Conscience Be My Guide – An Anthology of Prison Writings*. Harare: Weaver Press, 54. (Excerpt taken from a letter written by Welshman Mabhena).

⁷¹⁷ Ibid: 271. (Excerpt taken from a letter written by Fletcher Dulini Ncube).

⁷¹⁸ Ibid: 239. (Excerpt taken from a letter written by Paul Themba Nyathi).

that of a *necessity*, to a *constructive* means of upholding a ‘declared’ moral cause, and finally to the only *legitimate* framework in which to rule the nation.

7.1.1. Violence Unleashed

The Fifth Brigade represented the zenith of ZANU-PF’s legitimization of power in that it was released to apply violent force without restraint (despite the public insistence to the contrary by the ZANU-PF) and it employed an all-pervasive language of violence. The following script accentuates the vicious nature of this lethal combination of acted out violence punctuated by the spoken word:

“We know the dissidents don’t live on their own they live with you. If you don’t report [the presence of dissidents] tomorrow morning, I’m giving you one week, and then I’ll send my angels. If I tell my angels I want more than 200 heads chopped off, they will bring them here, they will do that if I order it as Jesus.”⁷¹⁹

Fifth Brigade Commander, O.M. Pongweni, better known as ‘Jesus’ spoke these words to a stunned and fearful Matabeleland community in 1983. When considering the socio-political context in which these words were uttered, the metaphorical power of the violence script is poignant.

Firstly, the narrator of this text (Pongweni) understood that he was speaking to a peasantry steeped in political ideology and by identifying himself as a ‘Black Jesus’ he was invoking a form of ‘Black consciousness’ awareness. This claim to possessing a ‘messianic’ mandate would have been scoffed at had it been sourced from a white Rhodesian soldier. After all, for the highly politicised rural masses on the ground the white man was the known ‘enemy’, but for a black freedom fighter like Pongweni who had considerable influence to identity himself as ‘Jesus’ was an attractive and intriguing label of legitimacy. However, because of the immediate threat to life being posed by Pongweni, this label also provoked a paradox; an ironic and exceptionally confusing alternative reading of all that the black consciousness movement stood for (blacks liberating blacks, not blacks killing blacks).

Secondly, Pongweni was addressing a Christianised people who would have immediately associated the name of Jesus with the undertaking of salvation, thereby

⁷¹⁹ Alexander, J., McGregor, J., & Ranger, T. 2000. *Violence & Memory – One Hundred Years in the ‘Dark Forests’ of Matabeleland*. Oxford: James Curry, 222-3.

elevating himself and the entire ZANU-PF liberation government which he represented to a functional level of Divine redemption; ‘Saviours’ of the masses on the ground. This kind of rhetoric not only made a mockery of religion, it immediately established an uneven power status of master and slave whereby the ordinary Zimbabwean citizen was now obliged, even indebted to serve their newly elected revolutionary leaders who ‘saved’ them from a banal existence of oppression. This would explain the demand for unquestioning obedience from the civilian population made by Pongweni in his pursuit of information about dissident whereabouts.

Thirdly, by referring to his foot soldiers as ‘angels’, Pongweni spoke volumes. Angels are characterised by innocence and imbued with perfection in such a way that this reference seems to declare that the Fifth Brigade soldiers moved with complete amnesty when enacting their violence on innocent civilians. In the end, when threatening to cut off 200 heads, Pongweni sent at least three clear messages about his perceptions of authority: that violence was preeminent no matter how gruesome or arbitrary it appeared, that his underlings will do his violent bidding with unwavering obedience, and that through this force to command violence at will he was imbued with a God-like characteristic; that of being omnipotent (having absolute power).

If these types of scripts had only been rhetorical, the recipient communities would have been able to insulate themselves and their families from the effects of these threats. However, these kinds of verbal tirades represented more than political sloganeering; they became frighteningly recognisable as the sadistic narrative preludes to severe acts of gross human rights violations for many thousands of Matabeleland civilians. The statements below provide first-hand accounts of this horrendous violence:

“And I got in touch with the Catholic Church and they took me into one of their own churches in downtown Bulawayo, into a basement, which was filled with hundreds of people who had escaped from Matabeleland North. And every single one of them had a story to tell of family members being killed, of neighbours being slaughtered, of huts being set on fire and everybody being shot who ran out. I mean, you know, they were horrifying stories. *And these were people who were being ‘clearly’ afraid for their lives.*”⁷²⁰

⁷²⁰ Interview: AM1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 10/08/06 – (White American Journalist who lived in Zimbabwe from 1980 until he was deported by the ZANU-PF government).

*“But I think it’s important for us to point out that the rhetoric that was used was such that it was impregnated with such violence, intimidation and harassment. And the whole idea was to instil fear and trepidation in the lives of the people. But derogatory language was used, e.g. sometimes they would meet up with a woman who would be pregnant. And they would take a bayonet from the gun and they would slit open the womb of the person, the woman that was pregnant. And they would say, ‘We are not intending to kill you, but we are killing the dissident in your womb.’ Or they would actually find a woman carrying a baby and the baby happened to be a boy. They would tie the baby on the back with a wire, alive. They would throw both the mother and the baby in a mine shaft. And what they would say is ‘We are killing dissidents. We want you to know that this is how we deal with dissidents.’”*⁷²¹

*“According to SS, the 5th brigade arrived in her area in February of 1983 and called for a meeting at Pumula Mission. At this meeting they were told that this army had come to kill every one in this area...The soldiers said to them ‘You, lady and your husband and children, take a shovel and come with us, you will die for no reason today’. They were beaten and bayoneted all over their bodies and heads...The whole SS family and two others chosen to die were made to dig their grave then they were made to lie on top of each other in two rows. The people in the grave were then shot and the villagers ordered to bury them using their hands as shovels. At the same time they were being beaten and made to dance on top of the grave as they were filling it up. She says these people were buried still alive because they could hear them screaming and groaning as people danced on top of them. The grave was only knee high. The soldiers also destroyed all the food they found in homes ‘to stop them from feeding the dissidents’”*⁷²²

The confounding impact of these violence narratives accompanied by the debilitating traumatising of horrific acts of terror and destruction are not easy to measure, but the effects still remain embedded in the psyche of many Matabeleland communities even today.

*“I think it’s a Maoist strategy...inciting violence...and don’t think that that fear has gone out of the people; I don’t accept that. The fear is still there in Matabeleland. Even now, if you really care to analyse the political behaviour now, you can see Gukurahundi is still at play, *there is so much fear.*”*⁷²³

⁷²¹ Interview: RM2, Johannesburg, South Africa - 26/02/08 – (Shona NGO peace activist advocating for trauma healing and reconciliation among rural Matabeleland communities and survivors of Gukurahundi violence).

⁷²² Victim’s statement transcribed 18/08/04, Gukurahundi Violence, Siyabalandela village (Matapos Line) Tsholotsho, Matabeleland.

⁷²³ Interview: PN1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 30/03/07 – (Ndebele historian, author, researcher and archivist).

The boldness with which ZANU-PF military and political leaders confidently proclaimed rhetorical violence would indicate that there was a culture of impunity at play for those who perpetrated political violence on behalf of the ZANU-PF government. This notion is reinforced in the seemingly careless public words of Enos Nkala, a prominent government Minister who in 1983 told the nation that:

“We want to wipe out ZAPU leadership. You’ve only seen the warning lights. We haven’t yet reached full blast...the murderous organisation and its murderous leadership must be hit so hard that it doesn’t feel obligated to do the things it has been doing.”⁷²⁴

The research conducted in this study would indicate that ZANU-PF gave its tacit consent, if not overt endorsement to a political system of violence. The following quotes are taken from public addresses given by the ZANU-PF President Robert Mugabe and are illustrative of the prevalence of this state-sanctioned violence system:

“Some of the measures we shall take are measures which will be extra-legal...an eye for an eye and ear for an ear may not be adequate in our circumstances. We might very well demand two ears for one and two eyes for one.”⁷²⁵

“The government will invoke extremely harsh measures to administer shock treatment to these harmful pests and their deceitful mentors. The swords are drawn and it will be war to the finish...The Government will take ‘extra-legal’ measures to deal with the security situation. As the government appreciated the task of the judges, [but] it cannot allow the technicalities of the law to fetter its hands for the preservation of law and order...Those who work against democracy do not deserve democratic treatment.”⁷²⁶

“When men and women provide food for the dissidents, when we get there we eradicate them. We don’t differentiate when we fight, because we can’t tell who is a dissident and who is not.”⁷²⁷

In these speech excerpts the audience (ordinary Zimbabwean citizens) were made to understand that the violence system of the ZANU-PF was sovereign in that it could act outside the ambit of the Law, that the ZANU-PF government as the executor and mediator of violence has the power to decide on what is, or is not a justifiable retribution

⁷²⁴ Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S. (2003). ‘The post-colonial state and Matabeleland: Regional perceptions of civil-military relations, 1980-2002.’ in Cawthra, G. and Abrahams, D. (Eds.) *Ourselves to Know – Civil-Military Relations and Defence Transformation in Southern Africa*. Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies, 27.

⁷²⁵ Meredith, 2008: 65.

⁷²⁶ Yap, K. 2001. *Uprooting the Weeds – Power, Ethnicity and Violence in the Matabeleland Conflict 1980-1987*. Stockholm: Elanders Novum, 170.

⁷²⁷ Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S, 2003: 29.

in the face of political threat, and that the ZANU-PF is exonerated from any responsibility for innocent lives that may be lost in acts of arbitrary violence. This chapter concerns itself with unravelling this milieu of *organised violence* in Zimbabwe and the various pillars of support that buttressed and framed the expression of violence in Matabeleland from 1980-87.

7.2. Legitimacy Narratives and Liberation Credentials

*“The same men wore both the hat and the helmet.”*⁷²⁸

The ZANU-PF has since independence attempted to ground the nation’s identity and its own legitimacy as a political power in the accomplishments of the Liberation War.⁷²⁹ However, from the onset of the Fifth Brigade violence in Matabeleland, the overriding narrative structure of the ZANU-PF has been slowly crumbling at its foundations. In part, because the dominant violence script seems to assume that those who lead in a liberation struggle are the only *legitimate* voices of power after independence. Professor John Makumbe of the University of Zimbabwe summarises this phenomena well:

“Indeed, whenever they are threatened with loss of political power, former liberation movements tend to resuscitate their original achievements as liberators as a license to continued tenure of office. They also harness their wartime tactics of instilling fear in the Electorate in order to win elections.”⁷³⁰

In concrete terms, the ZANU-PF appeared to have an unofficial policy that only liberation fighters who had fought in battle and suffered under violence itself were now imbued with the authentic power and moral mandate to govern over the people.

“...they [ZANU-PF] then termed themselves to become the *custodians of the Liberation Struggle*, to be the only people who actually were *authentic liberators*, and therefore the authentic story tellers of the Liberation Struggle, so that any elements they excluded were, as it were, not part of the Liberation Struggle and should be excluded...”⁷³¹

⁷²⁸ Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S. 2006. “Nationalist-Military Alliance and the Fate of Democracy in Zimbabwe”. *African Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 6 (1): 58.

⁷²⁹ Alexander, et al, 2000: 254.

⁷³⁰ Makumbe, J. 2003. “ZANU-PF: A party in transition?” In Cornwell, R. (ed.) *Zimbabwe’s Turmoil – Problems and Prospects*. ISS Monograph Series, No 87, September. Pretoria, South Africa: Institute for Security Studies, 38.

⁷³¹ Interview: JM1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 26/02/08 – (Shona Professor of Political Science in Zimbabwe).

“How can you want to rule without having suffered? Members of the present Government suffered in jail for many years, and Muzorewa [leader of internal faction] thinks he can just become prime minister without having gone through all the suffering we went through. This is impossible.”⁷³²

Robert Mugabe himself was projected as “the ultimate liberator, who had the people’s interest at [heart].”⁷³³ Patriotic narrative surrounding the person of Mugabe, the organisation of ZANU-PF, and the exploits of the Fifth Brigade abounded at that time:

“With selfless determination and single-minded dedication of purpose, the first Prime Minister of the Republic of Zimbabwe has been in the forefront of the struggle for political justice in this country for nearly two decades. Detained and imprisoned by successive Rhodesian governments for long periods, he overcame the attempts of the authorities to break him by the sheer force of his commitment to the struggle, and his conviction in the justice of the cause and the inevitability of victory. He led ZANU (PF) through the armed struggle to the overwhelming election victory in February 1980.”⁷³⁴

Judith Garfield Todd recounts her encounter with this emblazoned patriotism during the time when the Fifth Brigade entered Matabeleland:

“But I found an all-pervading anxiety about the 5th Brigade, which was being set up by the North Koreans, and was told that the brigade had to start each day with a salute to ‘MUGABE!’ An acquaintance of mine just back from Libya was in poor circumstances and asked me to find out how he could join 5 Brigade. I asked someone who would know what qualifications one had to have, and was told (1) absolute loyalty to Prime Minister Mugabe; and (2) absolute loyalty to the ruling party, Zanu (PF).”⁷³⁵

One interview respondent recalled the types of messages he had heard describing Mugabe and by default, the ZANU-PF’s essential liberation credentials in the early years of Independence:

“And then you heard of horrific stories of people being tortured. *So constantly you’re told about the fact that Mugabe himself was tortured and he was a hero, and because he was tortured on his testicles he couldn’t have children, and that story went around big time.* And you just got that whole sense that ‘man, when are we gonna eventually squash all these people that hate us?’ ... You constantly

⁷³² ‘Nkala tells why the Five Brigade exists’, (1983) *The Chronicle* (Bulawayo).

⁷³³ Ibid.

⁷³⁴ Mitchell, D. 1982. *Makers of History – Who’s Who 1981-82 – Nationalist Leaders in Zimbabwe*. Harare: Book Centre, 139.

⁷³⁵ Todd, J. 2007. *Through the Darkness – A life in Zimbabwe*. Cape Town: Zebra Press, 36-37.

got that sense that these Ndebele and the South African racist forces were basically trying to subvert the country.”⁷³⁶

“And then later on looking back, you’ve been so brought up in this mindset that...and though Gukurahundi came out, you had this very clear version that there was the revolution-one [black resistance in late 1890s] which was a failure, and then revolution-two [liberation struggle 1965-1980] which was a success, and there was the counter-revolutionaries [dissidents] ; they weren’t reactionaries ... Ian Smith and these guys were the reactionaries, and then you had the sell-outs [Muzorewa and Sithole]. So you had all the pieces laid out on the chess board and you were told who was who in the zoo. *And somehow those pieces always ended up making Mugabe look like the best thing.*”⁷³⁷

Yet, for much of the Matabeleland region, Mugabe and his party the ZANU-PF moved straight from a *liberation* struggle into a *legitimation* struggle. For the ZANU-PF narrative, legitimacy was equal to absolute power. However, for the pockets of resistance narratives in Matabeleland, government legitimacy could only be achieved by means of *recognition* for all its citizens, including the Ndebele and all those who chose to associate with ZAPU. In opposition to this idea that only those who had the ‘correct’ liberation credentials were legitimate political leaders, many counter narratives arose. The interview excerpts below represent a sample of these texts of opposition:

“*If the Independence is for us all, we should all be responsible if we have some duties to play. Anyway, who did not fight the Liberation Struggle? Any Zimbabwean who was alive that time, contributed in some way or the other. Our parents were feeding the guerrillas when they were fighting this war. Many people were supplying them with clothes, I personally did that. So, I wouldn’t want to be segregated... We were fighting for Independence and everybody must enjoy it anyway, we all contribute, it’s not for the few select. And when you [ZANU-PF politicians] talk about the ‘legitimacy’ again, it raises questions whether you are legitimate yourself. How come is it that people would vote for you and eventually go around complaining? To me that is contradicting the situation. I think it’s the manipulation that is there during the times of Elections and probably rigging... And taking advantage of the situation that you are empowered, you have the resources to campaign and stop other people from campaigning, intimidating, you beat up people and no arrests are made for those who are doing all that, and [you] protect the culprits... And even some of the guys that would be contesting the Parliamentary seats, they even use their guns to campaign, yes.*”⁷³⁸

⁷³⁶ Interview: TM1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 01/11/07 – (Shona Businessman whose relative was a prominent leader in the ZANU-PF government).

⁷³⁷ Ibid.

⁷³⁸ Interview: AN1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 12/09/07 – (Ndebele Church leader and Peace activist).

“If Zimbabwe can go [back] to Independence, all those heroes, who claim themselves to be heroes, I think they must answer questions, because you can’t be a hero and then kill. They started killing from outside when they were still in the Struggle, and nobody said anything about it. Can you be a hero when you kill other people? ... We need a God-fearing president there. If the head is firm, I think everything will be normal in Zimbabwe. But if the head, the President, is the one who is undecided and doesn’t know what to do; [he] has no authority... *Mugabe has no authority. He’s using violence because he has no authority.* If you can get a leader... who had authority, then things will be fine. You mustn’t use violence if you are a leader, you must have authority.”⁷³⁹

These scripts of resistance embody universal themes expressed by populations living under violent repression who are determined to identify what *just* leadership should be characterised by - *participation and integrity*. Firstly, there is the deep call for leaders to acknowledge the human dignity and recognise the sacrificial role that the civilian populace has played by carrying the liberation of the country from the ground up. Secondly, the civil society is not easily duped by abusive leadership; they recognise good governance when they experience it, and they understand that strong leadership must *earn* authority, not *demand* it (autocracy). Rhetorical revolutionary slogans such as: ‘*The people shall govern*’ mean nothing if the citizenry of any given country is not consulted and feeling empowered to engage its leadership in constructive processes of consensus decision-making and genuine nation-building. There is a palatable reaction of cynicism and scorn coming from the people of Matabeleland when they hear and read public discourse of this nature coming from their own prime minister:

“Without political power firmly in the hands of the people, without jobs and food and other necessities of life, there can be pretty little anyone can do to help the oppressed who are being terrorised by imperialism... let us continually bear in mind the people’s untold suffering and be inspired by such suffering into fighting harder; let us make our war the people’s war.”⁷⁴⁰

“If you allege atrocities, give us the concrete evidence. We are humanitarians, we don’t want to see people killed wantonly, killed for no purpose.”⁷⁴¹

⁷³⁹ Interview: JD1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 15/09/06 – (Female Ndebele NGO activist advocating for women and refugees rights).

⁷⁴⁰ Mugabe, R. 1983. *Our War of Liberation – Speeches, Articles, Interviews 1976-1979*. Harare: Mambo Press, 122 and 132.

⁷⁴¹ ‘No Reason to Ban Zupu, Says Mugabe’, (1983) *The Herald (Harare)* 13 March.

These promises rang hollow for the Matabeleland region. Liberation credentials were not sufficient for the citizens of Matabeleland to accept repression from their new black government. The trust that naturally flows out of valid legitimacy was torn asunder when the so-called ‘freedom fighters’ of Zimbabwe transformed into ‘oppressive dictators’. The history of the Matabeleland massacres should remind subsequent generations of Zimbabwean politicians to never underestimate the visceral sense of betrayal that the masses feel when the leaders they look to for self-determination offer them hypocrisy instead.

7.3. Legitimacy Narratives and the Militarisation of the State

“Only the dead have seen the end of war.”⁷⁴²

Professor Geoff Harris defines a militarised society as such: “the military controls or strongly influences government policies and actions; there is a strong military ethos and military ideals are dominant; security is viewed as fundamentally a military matter and military imperatives dominate the security agenda; and the use of force or the threat to use force is high on the list of possible responses to any disputes which may arise.”⁷⁴³ All four of these characteristics of militarised societies were not only prevalent; they were actively engaged with in the context of the Gukurahundi violence in Matabeleland during the early 1980s. In fact, for over ten years a state of emergency was declared in Matabeleland and the Midlands.⁷⁴⁴ Curfews, road-blocks and search and seizure exercises were employed on a regular basis. The precise legislation that had been utilised by the Smith regime against the Liberation struggle movements was now being applied to the black opposition ZAPU, the ‘dissidents’ and the civilian population. The following interview transcripts bear witness to life under this constant state of military emergency:

“But I do know in 1983, that’s the time that we moved from Magwegwe West to Queenspark. And we moved during curfew that was in force...at that time it was like Gukurahundi time and there were road blocks and the cars were not going. But somehow, you know, when we got to a roadblock we’d explain what we were doing and then be allowed to go through... [Also] I know that in 1983 there used to be a helicopter...one of those old, you know, with the loudspeaker that would

⁷⁴² Batley, K. 2007. *A Secret Burden – Memories of the Border War by South African Soldiers who fought in it*. Johannesburg and Cape Town: Jonathan Ball Publishers, xii. (Quote by George Santayana).

⁷⁴³ Harris, G. (ed.) 2004. *Achieving Security in Sub-Saharan Africa – Cost Effective Alternatives to the Military*. Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies, 3.

⁷⁴⁴ Ayittey, G. 1998. *Africa in Chaos*. New York: St Martins Press, 92.

go around and say ‘you are now being surrounded by the police and the soldiers’. They were going into houses and searching for weapons or whatever else.”⁷⁴⁵

“Later on the soldiers began to come into our houses, just to search. Unfortunately my house was the first one by the corner so they came in there. They wanted to search in the house; they beat me up by using the butt of their batons...their guns. The pain I had was not of the beating, the most pain I had was being beaten up right in my house. Where do I run to? Because I could not run to the soldiers outside, they are beating up some people again. To me, that was the most painful experience that I was helpless, beaten up in front of my kids; that was really painful.”⁷⁴⁶

Naturally, if having been a liberation fighter was a prerequisite for legitimate political leadership in Zimbabwe, then all the structures of government would eventually and necessarily undergo a course of militarisation. The ZANU-PF seamlessly and shamelessly ushered in a merging of the military and political realms in Zimbabwe as early as the first Independence Elections in April of 1980. Evidence shows that even at that threshold of democratic freedom, ZANU, through its armed wing ZANLA was carefully planning how to use systematic violence to harass, intimidate and even eliminate the rural Matabeleland populations if they did not support ZANU-PF in the polls. In the findings of Norma Kriger:

“To ensure their party won the election, thousands of ZANLA guerrillas were deliberately kept out of the assembly camps in violation of the [peace] settlement. After the ceasefire, and thus also in violation of the settlement, ZANLA infiltrated thousands of its guerrillas from Mozambique into the country, most likely in an attempt to enable ZANLA guerrillas to assemble in the numbers the party had promised at Lancaster House...The British election monitors’ report claimed that in one-third of the rural areas the voters were not free to vote, chiefly because of ZANU (PF)/ZANLA violence and intimidation.”⁷⁴⁷

Judith Garfield Todd included this voice of prophetic warning in regard to Mugabe’s commitment to the violence inherent in militarisation:

“Just before the 1980 elections, veteran Aaron Mutiti warned: ‘What Mugabe himself has done to his fellow Zimbabweans in exile during the last three years deprives his hollow assurances of any credibility. Unless the people of this

⁷⁴⁵ Interview: DN3, Johannesburg, South Africa – 30/10/07 – (Ndebele NGO peace worker facilitating trauma healing and reconciliation among rural Matabeleland communities and survivors of Gukurahundi violence).

⁷⁴⁶ Interview: AN1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 12/09/07 – (Ndebele Church leader and Peace activist).

⁷⁴⁷ Kriger, N. 2003. “War Veterans: Continuities Between the Past and the Present”. *African Studies Quarterly*, 7, no.2&3: [online] URL: <http://web.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v7/v7i2a7.htm> , 2.

country are vigilant, they are in for a rude shock. Family life, religious life and economic life as we know it will progressively disappear if Mugabe gets to power. We must not close our eyes to this threat. He rates his communist ideology higher than people.’”⁷⁴⁸

As one interviewee so aptly put it:

“He [Mugabe] said the guns that liberated this country will be the guns that sustain him in power; can that give you peace?”⁷⁴⁹

The pomp and circumstance of state ceremony, public ritual during official holidays and propaganda manufactured from the state-run media all served to consolidate this progression of ZANU-PF state militarisation. In order to heighten the patriotic fervour of the people, militarisation was show-cased as the triumph of the revolution and the glory of the nation. State militarisation served as a badge of honour to the warrior’s prowess of the ZANU-PF army, and a symbol of exaltation and praise for their fighting power over the dominating forces of the white colonial regime. In work on political memorialisation, Pamela Machakanja summarises this process succinctly:

“People are reminded never to doubt or in any way question the living presence of the liberation memory. To do so would signify betrayal of the heroes and the nationalist ideals... Through this commemorative event [political memorialisation], the people – especially the youth – are reminded about the debt they owe the nation’s heroes who laid down their lives so that future generations could enjoy freedom.”⁷⁵⁰

Several research respondent recollections also serve to undergird this phenomenon:

“And, I remember every Heroes Day. There were three major days in Zimbabwe where, as a child you were traumatized by the scenes of dead bodies scattered across the screen, and basically how so many people had died for the country. And you are told over and over again that we mustn’t forget our heroes, you know, we had fought for our Liberation Struggle, and showed many gruesome scenes of white policeman beating black people and setting dogs on them, shooting people and things like that. And you’d hear all sorts of stories from grandparents, relatives. My mother had her brother who just disappeared in the war; no-one knows where he went. So this is all the backdrop of Zimbabwe, that it was a country seeped in blood. You got that sense that even to get its Independence, it was seeped in blood, and there was that real sense that it wasn’t

⁷⁴⁸ Todd, J. 2007: 423.

⁷⁴⁹ Interview: PK1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 30/03/07 – (A prominent member of Ndebele Royal Family).

⁷⁵⁰ Machakanja, P. 2008. “Politics of Memory: Collective Remembering and Manipulation of the Past in Zimbabwe”. *Africa Peace and Conflict Journal*, 1 (1), 60.

an easy victory and many sacrificed. *And those who are alive should be happy and be careful not to forget.*"⁷⁵¹

"I suppose it [the glorification of militarisation] comes, you know, nearer the time; like now we're close to Independence, April 18, they'll bring that in. We've got a Unity Day holiday and that is played. We've got the Heroes Day holidays and that comes up. Because it proceeds the days that are set aside as holidays to commemorate these situations, so I suppose one has to expect that, I think. *It's a State television thing and it 'has' to ... it is Public Relations, 'lest we forget' is the easy way around it.*"⁷⁵²

Underneath the continual 'glorification' of ZANU-PF militarisation, there were also veiled threats of repressive violence meant to intimidate any critics and detractors who were not willing to fall in line with the status quo. Respondents describe a kind of socio-political climate characterised by a continuous march to the beat of patriotic, national militarisation:

"And, you see the world helps Mugabe from a variety of perspectives. It obviously bolsters his international images, this icon of Liberation. But domestically, it's not just a reminder of his and ZANU-PF history; *it's also a reminder of what they're capable of.*"⁷⁵³

"...democracy is what we [ZANU-PF] thrust upon you; it's a privilege. If you say anything; remember the gun, remember the bombs in Mozambique, remember the bombs in Zambia, remember the bombs everywhere. So here is what we are saying, this is 'your' democracy. We are giving it to you as a people BUT if you go back; remember...So it's just a psychological gimmick to say to the people of Zimbabwe that 'you can't talk about democracy without Mugabe saying it to you that 'this is democracy'. If I use psychology, it's a whole traumatising of the whole nation, scaring everybody. [It] is simply to say *'this is how we did it'...in fact it is pre-empting dissent, and even war, so everybody's scared, so it's just to scare the whole nation.*"⁷⁵⁴

The progression of the militarisation process in Zimbabwe was comprehensive and stratified. It displayed an overt expression for sure, and yet through myriad other avenues it was nuanced in nature and reach. As discussed in Chapter 6, ZANLA

⁷⁵¹ Interview: TM1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 01/11/07 – (Shona Businessman whose relative was a prominent leader in the ZANU-PF government).

⁷⁵² Interview: DN2, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 30/03/07- (Ndebele retired journalist and one of the editors for the state-run newspaper the Chronicle during the 1980s).

⁷⁵³ Interview: DC1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe - 13/09/07 (White Zimbabwean Human Rights Lawyer and politician).

⁷⁵⁴ Interview: GS1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 17/08/06 – (Shona Human Rights Lawyer and survivor of severe torture as a political prisoner under the ZANU-PF government).

systematically privileged itself above ZIPRA for key positions of rank and leadership in the scramble for power within the Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA). Through the use of extreme intimidation and ‘unofficial’ violence many ex-ZIPRA soldiers were purged from the Army or forced to take abuse in lower level positions. Another ‘script’ in this drama of militarisation was the use of highly provocative slogans by ZANU-PF officials and politicians without any public sanction from the central government. Exceptionally inciting phrases like ‘*Pasi ne Machuwachuwa*’ (Down with ZIPRA) and ‘*Pasi ne vanematumbu*’ (Down with those with big stomachs – referring to Nkomo), were regularly recited to the crowds at the beginning and end of ZANU-PF political rallies.⁷⁵⁵ ZANU-PF not only utilised a heavy dose of struggle propaganda, it refused to allow the furtherance of ZAPU/ZIPRA party slogans, symbols, songs and regalia at any national ceremonies like independence and Heroes Days.⁷⁵⁶ One patent example of this was the popular radio programme called *Dzimbo dzeChimurenga Dzakasunungura* (meaning Chimurenga songs that liberated Zimbabwe) which evidently *only* played ZANLA (Shona) liberation struggle songs. Apparently, this broadcast aired nationally every Sunday morning up until the signing of the Unity Accord on 22 December 1987.⁷⁵⁷

Thus, the militarisation of Zimbabwe by the ZANU-PF government materialised as an extension of the Liberation struggle. The former guerrillas, now turned national soldiers, continued to enjoy a liberal power over the civilian population, a privilege they had been afforded during the independence war. As opposed to being confined to the barracks as would be the case for conventional armies in seasons of peace-time, these newly empowered ZANLA freedom fighters were released to exert control over the rural masses in Matabeleland as in times past. In the words of one respondent, “I mean all parastatals are now run by ex-soldiers. At what stage is the community or society being free to work ‘with’ a soldier? It simply means that they are militarising simple, social activities. And there’s no way you can count on peace in a situation like that.”⁷⁵⁸

⁷⁵⁵ Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2006: 62.

⁷⁵⁶ Kriger, N. 2003. *Guerrilla Veterans in Post-War Zimbabwe: Symbolic and Violent Politics, 1980-1987*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 75.

⁷⁵⁷ Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2006: 63.

⁷⁵⁸ Interview: PK1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 30/03/07 – (A prominent member of Ndebele Royal Family).

Identifying the *source* from which conventional armies and guerrilla armies are controlled and infused with internalised discipline is a critical distinction that is necessary to this discussion. Conventional armies are kept in check and balance through the discipline of *professionalization*. On the other hand, guerrilla armies are steered and driven by extreme *politicisation*; their motivation originating in radical ideological indoctrination.⁷⁵⁹ In Zimbabwe, the newly independent ZANU-PF ruling party unmistakably refused to translate its decidedly politicised ZANLA guerrilla army into a peace-time professional army. As a result, the ZANU-PF forfeited the ‘democracy’ that they had consistently promised the people of Zimbabwe and instead embraced the flawed and fatal destiny of state militarisation.

7.4. Legitimacy Narratives and the Disciplinary Function of Violence

A state-sanctioned, ‘legitimated’ violence, whether overt or covert, serves a coherent *disciplinary* end. Structural violence can be transformed into an agent of acute *regulation* silencing any voices of dissent and subjugating any threatening actions of resistance and insurgency. This kind of excessive domination over the socio-political landscape of human networks and relational proclivities requires a *residential* structure; a presence characterised by extended tentacles of informational and interactional control. A comprehensive, residential presence of this nature could also be categorised as an *occupational* force. In military parlance ‘occupational forces’ represent the presence of alien army troops placed in a certain geographical space by outside actor-agents for the purposes of controlling fighting elements in that specific area. In copious ways, this analogy of *occupation* could be applied to the posture taken by the ruling party in the Matabeleland context during the 1980s. Put differently, the ZANU-PF occupied Matabeleland uninvited both as an actual military-security force and a socio-political presence of *disciplinary* power. The disciplinary power of ZANU-PF’s occupation was precisely in its ability to invade the *private* places of dissent (in people’s memory, political views, family homes, and work or worship organisations), expose that resistance and thereby demand a kind of respect through a forced ritual of renunciation in the *public* space. Commenting on the seminal work of Michel Foucault, Steven Seidman crafts a lucid description of the disciplinary society:

⁷⁵⁹ Ibid: 58.

“In a disciplinary society, order is maintained through technologies of control such as spatial separation, time management, confinement, surveillance, and a system of examinations that classify and rank individuals for the purpose of normalizing social behaviour.”⁷⁶⁰

The ZANU-PF employed a spectrum of political-structural and social-historical apparatuses at its disposal in such a commanding manner that it successfully dictated the interpretations of history, politics, media, leadership and development with far-reaching, disciplinary outcomes for Matabeleland. The disciplinary implication of this form of indirect, structural violence that was discharged during the period of Gukurahundi repression is the subject of dissection in this subsequent section.

7.4.1. Discipline through Historical Indoctrination

The prevalence of historical manipulation has surfaced throughout this study. Indeed, according to this research, the narratives of ethnic conflict (Chapter 4), of nationalism (Chapter 5), and of loyalty (Chapter 6) can only be fully understood in the light of subjective, historical manipulation by the ZANU-PF and its powerful political stooges. Pamela Machakanja describes the power of past memory when it is fashioned for present political purposes:

“As a source of power, the past can be appropriated in the present as a mechanism that serves to legitimise or de-legitimise political actions both violent and nonviolent. When this process is controlled by the ruling elite, who often claim monopoly over interpretation of the past, certain aspects of the past can be distorted and manipulated to satisfy political agendas.”⁷⁶¹

However, this twisting of historical memory by the ZANU-PF not only served the convenience of the political exploitation occurring in Matabeleland in the early 1980s it also became a tool for the indoctrination of a whole generation of children born in post-independence Zimbabwe. After independence, school-aged children across the nation were fed a one-sided liberation struggle history that gave pre-eminence to the story of ZANU and ZANLA. It represented an historical narrative re-write that glorified ZANLA military exploits and exempted ZANU from any traces of cowardice, corruption and

⁷⁶⁰ Seidman, S. 1994. *Contested Knowledge – Social Theory Today*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 189.

⁷⁶¹ Machakanja, 2008: 45.

greed. In his excellent work on ‘patriotic history’, Professor Terence Ranger summarises this biased view of historical presentation with precision:

“Patriotic history is intended to proclaim the continuity of the Zimbabwean revolutionary tradition. It is an attempt to reach out to ‘youth’ over the heads of their parents and teachers, all of whom are said to have forgotten or betrayed revolutionary values. It repudiates academic historiography with its attempts to complicate and question. At the same time it confronts Western ‘bogus universalism’ which it depicts as a denial of the concrete history of global oppression. ‘Patriotic history’ is propagated at many levels – on television and in the state-controlled press; in youth militia camps; in new school history courses and textbooks; in books written by cabinet ministers; in speeches by Robert Mugabe and in philosophical eulogies and glosses of those speeches by Zimbabwe’s media controller, Tafataona Mahoso. It is a coherent but complex doctrine”⁷⁶²

The book authored by David Martin and Phyllis Johnson and entitled, *The Struggle for Zimbabwe: Chimurenga War* (1981) became an official text of the liberation struggle. It was required reading in every secondary school across the nation, despite the fact that it marginalised other liberation forces and movements and exalted the ZANU-PF as the key protagonist in the fight for Zimbabwe’s independence.⁷⁶³ According to the following interview respondents, this patriotic history was seeped in violence, political ideology and the voice of the ‘conqueror’ dominated the story:

“And I think that whole problem was caused by the fact that you had immense power, *you had a background and litany of violence, of bloodshed*, and [at] the centre we had a very bloodthirsty belief system in the form of Communism, Socialism where the end justifies the means, and where you were either revolutionary or counter- revolutionary, and even growing up in Zimbabwe in school, I studied history for ZJC (Zimbabwe Junior Certificate). You were told about everything from a very Socialist point-of-view.”⁷⁶⁴

“...history always comes in the perspective...in the view of the conqueror. *If you are the conqueror you write the history the way you want*. So I think...the reason why certain people have been in government for so long in Zimbabwe now is, they have been singing praises to Mugabe. They have not been opposing him in any of the policies he suggests or anything, I mean you’re so scared; even the

⁷⁶² Ranger, T. 2003. “Nationalist Historiography, Patriotic History and the History of the Nation: the struggle over the past in Zimbabwe”. *Journal for Southern African Studies* 30 (2), 1.

⁷⁶³ Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2006: 63.

⁷⁶⁴ Interview: TM1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 01/11/07 – (Shona Businessman whose relative was a prominent leader in the ZANU-PF government).

ones that came up with the issue of learning the history of Zimbabwe. You know like when you talk about that, then certain people will then say ‘okay, why do we have to go back to the 60s? Let’s start from 1980.’”⁷⁶⁵

“So the problem is that, *every aspect of the history of current Zimbabwe has been monopolised by ZANU*. And unfortunately the historians, [who] have access to media, access to influence the policies of education; they are all Shona and they are all from ZANU, so the story that they tell obviously is very biased for my own understanding... we never hear about the exploits that ZIPRA did, it’s all silent.”⁷⁶⁶

From the above transcripts, it is obvious that a ‘patriotic history’ exercise of this nature thrives on binary thinking; either revolutionary or counter-revolutionary, there was no categorical space in-between. Also, of interest is the unmistakable role of *fear* in the motivation and scripting of this form of hegemonic historical account. When history originates and is projected out of an authorship defined by fear and traumatisation it is bound to be deformed in its core. If fear is the driving impulse for the production of history the text is bound to be written with the adversary always present in the discourse. In this way, a fearful history is constantly presented with the ‘enemy’ in mind; a continuous response to the ever-present threat of the opponent. The challenge of dealing with the Gukurahundi violence has been to discover how to exorcise the ‘demons’ of fear and insecurity whose shadows were thrust upon the interpretations of history in Matabeleland in the 1980s.

While the ZANU-PF manufactured a tailor-made ‘patriotic history’, the voices of historical dissent continued to surface. These emergent protest narratives were fuelled by the fundamental human need for public recognition:

“We want our real history to be written in the correct manner. It must be written by us. Each and everyone must write his history. ZANU must write its own history, it is ZANLA. As it happened we must write our own history. *But the history that was written these past years is only considered ZANLA, only...* But I myself, I spent seven years in the bush, I’m well experienced, we fought for this

⁷⁶⁵ Interview: DL1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 11/08/06 - (Ndebele Journalist employed as a business editor for a prominent newspaper).

⁷⁶⁶ Interview: DN3, Johannesburg, South Africa – 30/10/07 – (Ndebele NGO peace worker facilitating trauma healing and reconciliation among rural Matabeleland communities and survivors of Gukurahundi violence).

country. This country was liberated by ZIPRA. Even the former Commander of the Rhodesian Army, he said in the opening words ‘If Joshua Nkomo can give me ZIPRA, I can rule this country from Cape to Cairo’. You can ask what it means, *but they’re all silent and now they are changing the statements and say they fought.*”⁷⁶⁷

“.... all the songs which everyone listens to are ZANLA songs. Where are the ZIPRA songs? [As if] ZANU-PF fought the Struggle alone. So that’s why I’m saying the history is one-sided. A fair history must involve both sides. We must one day see [on television] the ZIPRA guys being trained in Zambia or singing in Zambia, crossing the Zambezi River to Zimbabwe, fully armed, sing their Ndebele song, but you can’t see that... That’s why I’m saying, the history is not enough. *Like our children at the moment are being taught the ZANU-PF history as if the ZANU-PF was alone in the Struggle, yet the ZIPRA Forces played a big role.* And Joshua Nkomo was ‘Father Zimbabwe’, but his history is now manipulated... I really don’t believe the history. I’d rather read the history from ‘outside’, like someone who is writing from outside Zimbabwe, who is a neutral person, an independent writer who is writing about the struggles of Zimbabwe. I think he [the outsider] can write better than what ZANU-PF is telling Zimbabweans. There are many people who were killed even within ZANLA forces, being killed by Mugabe, trying to pave [a] way for himself. We understand people like Chitepo, Tongogara were eliminated by Mugabe, but the ZANU-PF doesn’t put it clear, it doesn’t tell the people exactly what happened to Tongogara. He died five minutes to Independence, because Tongogara wanted a ‘united Zimbabwe’. Mugabe wanted a ZANU-PF, Shona government.”⁷⁶⁸

From the interviews conducted, there was an understandable urgency to the call for a re-writing of the history of the liberation struggle in Zimbabwe and consequentially, the history of the Matabeleland violence of the 1980s:

“This is the major problem down there, they used this discourse which emanates from their nationalist history... Personally I do not agree. *I think there were numerous nationalist actors with different imaginations.* And if we have different types of pictures of Zimbabwe, then you cannot say I am a-patriotic or anti-patriotic. It becomes very problematic.”⁷⁶⁹

“I remember one of my sons was picked to this Green Bomber [militarised ZANU-PF youth wing] training. When he came back, I was very disappointed. I asked him ‘Just tell me exactly what were you taught about, bring your book’. I was shocked; ZIPRA didn’t fight, it [ZIPRA] was full of making sex in the bush.

⁷⁶⁷ Interview: AN2, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 12/09/07 – (Ndebele Ex-ZIPRA Soldier).

⁷⁶⁸ Interview: RM1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 14/09/06 – (Ndebele former Head of Security for opposition party MDC and survivor of severe torture as a political prisoner under the ZANU-PF government).

⁷⁶⁹ Interview: SG1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 20/12/07 – (Ndebele Professor of Political Science, researcher and author).

Gukurahundi was committed by the British in 1978. This is the history that they are being taught in school. This is a distorted history. *We need our history of the people of Zimbabwe. ZANU and ZANLA have their own history that side, ZAPU and ZIPRA have their own history that side; we put them together.*"⁷⁷⁰

"So I think there's a lot to be done and to me *we have to rewrite the history in an independent way, not biased like what is in Zimbabwe now.* They are now forcing our children to know more about ZANLA, to know more about ZANU-PF, to know more about Mugabe but, Mugabe was just the Secretary General... there were [other] leaders within the ZANU-PF who were senior to Mugabe but we don't know much about them, only Mugabe, Mugabe, Mugabe. *So I still believe that history must start afresh.*"⁷⁷¹

The revised historical script being summoned forth by these respondents seems to necessitate the inclusion of the voice of ZAPU/ZIPRA and those texts of multiple, diverse experiences of the people on the ground (both civilian and military) who 'lived' the history of the struggle. This historical re-write would in its essence be a participatory exercise full of cacophony and complexity; a problematic, yet realistic project in historical renovation.

7.4.2. Discipline through Political Manipulation

In the early years of Independence, the primary form of political manipulation that ZANU-PF utilised was election violence and intimidation. As was noted earlier, evidence indicates that even in the first all-inclusive election polls of April 1980, ZANLA operatives readily engaged in coercive tactics especially against rural voters. The British election monitoring report described these techniques of ZANLA as follows:

"Whether or not they were acting on instruction of their political leaders... They [violent acts] extended from brutal 'disciplinary murders' as examples of the fate awaiting those who failed to conform to generalised threats of retribution of a continuance or resumption of the war if ZANU(PF) failed to win the election to psychological pressure like name-taking and claims to the possession of machines which would reveal how individuals had voted and to the physical interdiction of attendance at meetings. The universal longing for peace, and the ambience of recent violence, made the threats of general retribution or a continuance of the war a potent weapon even in the hands of unarmed activists, since it was independent of the secrecy of the ballot."⁷⁷²

⁷⁷⁰ Interview: AN2, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 12/09/07 – (Ndebele Ex-ZIPRA Soldier).

⁷⁷¹ Interview: RM1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 14/09/06 – (Ndebele former security officer for opposition party and survivor of severe torture as a political prisoner under the ZANU-PF government).

⁷⁷² Report of the Election Commissioner Sir John Boynton, MC, 1980. *Southern Rhodesia Independence Elections 1980*. Cmd. 7935. London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 11.

One interviewee articulates the sense of almost inherent violence that has accompanied the political activity of the ZANU-PF from its inception into power:

“ZANU has been a violent party, and even the President himself for one time has been quoted to say ‘*he has got degrees in violence*’. So if you have got a ‘degree’ in violence, surely you want to expose the knowledge which you have acquired. If you have acquired a degree in Theology, you also want to expose that you understand theological concepts. You can not have a degree and stash it in the cupboard... People will just be beaten up for no apparent reason. And then when I started connecting I realized it’s a kind of control strategy that had [existed] for time immemorial; *if you can not submit by choice freely, then we’ll persuade you to submit by some peer policies by way of you being beaten up.*”⁷⁷³

The violent power described here is marked by a public, boastful arrogance on the part of its leaders, an arbitrary application among the civilian populace, and an utter disregard for the free-will choice of the citizenry whom the leaders purport to rely on for support. According to interviews with Zimbabwean ex-combatants conducted by Norma Kriger in 1992, “ZANLA guerrillas who had campaigned in the 1980 election were later paid by their victorious party for their revolutionary contributions.”⁷⁷⁴

In like manner, election violence, intimidation and coercive threats by ZANU-PF-supported Youth Militia structures were prevalent in the 1985 polls. ZAPU members reported house damage, property loss, forcible attendance of ZANU-PF rallies, and the application of repressive measures to compel people to relinquish ZAPU party membership cards in ‘exchange’ for ZANU-PF-issued cards, all perpetrated by party members and the youth militia groups trained by the ZANU-PF. The following victim’s statements bear witness to the repressive conditions prevailing in Matabeleland at that time:

“15 youths stormed my home and ransacked it. The Zanu (PF) members threw [us] outside, locked our house and took the keys away. They said we would not get our house keys until we surrendered our party cards and got those of Zanu (PF). We slept outside in the cold last night, and I don’t know what we will do next. We reported the matter to the police, but they said that [they] had no power to intervene.”⁷⁷⁵

⁷⁷³ Interview: JN1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 29/03/07 – (Ndebele teacher and activist working for the Catholic Commission on Peace and Justice CCJP in the 1980s).

⁷⁷⁴ Kriger, 2007: 2.

⁷⁷⁵ ‘Mugabe Followers Riot, Evict Some Zapu Rivals’, (1985) *The Sun* 9 July.

“It is no use reporting this sort of thing to the police [ZANU-PF Youth harassment] because they are afraid of party officials. Remember the post-election violence when they watched us being harassed and property thrown out of homes...it won't help.”⁷⁷⁶

“People live in fear because they may be killed at any time. People live in suspicion because they fear that the Zanu youths will force them to buy Zanu cards. People live in fear of being harassed one way or another. If we are going to have elections under such a situation, it means the elections will not be free and fair.”⁷⁷⁷

What is blatantly evident in the above paragraphs is that the disciplinary network of the ZANU-PF violence spread beyond random acts of political vigilantism by ZANU-PF community members. It was further propped up by the *silent complicity* of the official public security apparatus (e.g. police) which maintained steadfast loyalty to the ZANU-PF throughout. Not only were civilian members of the ZANU-PF allowed free reign to perpetrate violence without consequence, the ZAPU civilian victims had extremely limited recourse. Most Matabeleland victim's testimonials depict a situation where they received little if no assistance from the police and other government security branches when attempting to report and request intervention in the violence they were experiencing. This only served to further widen the gap of *mistrust* between the citizens of Matabeleland and the image-tainted ZANU-PF government. This deep mistrust in the political realm and the inability of the state to protect its own people produced a deafening silence in Matabeleland. Accordingly, the below text addresses the constant hindrances to free-speech that plagues Matabeleland over this time:

“[T]here was never a time when people could talk freely. You see there was always the youth militia...I know in the 80s there was the issue of the Brigades and all, the ZANU-PF Brigades, whereby most of the youths...it was mostly in the rural areas, they were kind of like integrated into it, you know, it was almost like...a North Korea type of situation, the only difference being that people [in Matabeleland] were only liberated through education. That is the thing of people being allowed to go to school, they went to school, and those who made it, made it big and like they understood and they held their views, so they couldn't be brainwashed. But unfortunately in the villages of Mashonaland it was quite different. I mean every song was about Robert Mugabe, you know it was just

⁷⁷⁶ ‘Headaches for Zanu(PF)’, (1986) *Parade Magazine* (Harare) January Edition, 21 & 48.

⁷⁷⁷ Berkeley, B. and Schrage, E. 1986. *Zimbabwe: Wages of War: A Report on Human Rights*. New York: Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, 114. (Statement by Zapu MP in Parliament –1985).

praises for him; everything...even the Zimbabwe history books which are done at junior certificate level, Form 1 and 2, they now talk about Robert Mugabe.”⁷⁷⁸

Thus, in the above paragraph, descriptive weight is given to the scheme of ZANU-PF’s relentless disciplinary strategy; the effective suppression of free speech in the public realm by the twinning together of historical indoctrination and political manipulation.

7.4.3. Discipline through Media Restrictions

“He [Mugabe] has effectively numbed the brain through the manipulation of the information sector.”⁷⁷⁹

At the time of independence, Zimbabwe inherited a white-dominated media with a clear bias against the newly elected black government of the ZANU-PF. Thus, in January of 1981, the ZANU-PF Ministry of Information established the Mass Media Trust (MMT), an ‘independent’ public trust whose mission was to ‘decolonise’ and ‘democratise’ the print media in Zimbabwe. However, with the mounting security issues surfacing in Matabeleland, the ZANU-PF became increasingly determined to control the information sector and this led to obvious tensions between the opposition and the MMT, which was rapidly being surrendered under the direction of the ruling party:

“The trust’s ‘independent’ Board of Trustees included senior Zanu figures and had few representatives from the minority Zapu party or from other bodies that had a history of critical engagement with the Rhodesian government in the print media...Zapu criticised the Trust from its inception, arguing that the Ministry of Information used ‘the news media as Zanu propaganda tools rather than as channels for national development, unity, reconciliation and entertainment.’”⁷⁸⁰

The ZANU-PF’s misuse of the state-run media for purposes of extending its political propaganda and spreading hate speech against ZAPU/ZIPRA during the 1980s has already been well-documented throughout this research. What is less apparent is the extent to which the official control of the media, both restriction of movement and freedom of expression, contributed to the far-reaching *silencing of narratives*; narratives

⁷⁷⁸ Interview: DL1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 11/08/06 - (Ndebele Journalist employed as a business editor for a prominent newspaper).

⁷⁷⁹ Interview: JM1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 26/02/08 – (Shona Professor of Political Science in Zimbabwe).

⁷⁸⁰ Alexander, J. and McGregor, J. 1999. Representing Violence in Matabeleland, Zimbabwe: Press and Internet Debates, in Allen T. and Seaton, J. (eds.) *The Media of Conflict: War Reporting and Representations of Ethnic Violence*, London and New York: Zed Books, 248.

that would have exposed the state-sanctioned violence being perpetrated in Matabeleland and given voice to oppositional truth. At stake in this battle to control the information sector is a contestation over the powerful role of the media to not only influence public opinion, but even more importantly to build a sense of *pseudo-community* among the citizens of a particular nation. In his innovative work on ‘imagined communities’, Benedict Anderson offers a fascinating portrayal of the command of the daily newspaper in shaping the experience of this surreal community:

“The significance of this mass ceremony [daily newspaper reading] - Hegel observed that newspapers serve modern man as a substitute for morning prayers – is paradoxical. It is performed in silent privacy, in the lair of the skull. Yet each communicant is well aware that the ceremony he performs is being replicated simultaneously by thousands (or millions) of other of whose existence he is confident, yet of whose identity he has not the slightest notion...What more vivid figure for the secular, historically clocked, imagined community can be envisioned?”⁷⁸¹

This virtual community inhabits a pivotal national space where the masses can be harnessed and mobilised for political ends, either constructive or destructive. In the case of the Zimbabwe the media was controlled by the State in an attempt to garner unwavering support (read here ‘legitimacy’) for its ideological agenda which was being undercut by the ‘dissident’ crisis in Matabeleland. To accomplish these ends, the ZANU-PF decided to sacrifice the media’s *freedom of movement* and the *freedom of speech* on the Alter of absolute power. The following transcriptions attest to this contestation over access by the media to alternative geographical and experiential sources of information that would have paved the way for more progressive, objective, and advocacy-driven reporting to occur:

“[F]irstly, the areas were cordoned...[media] were not allowed to go into those areas so information was hard to come by; *journalists could not be allowed in so information was hard to come by.*”⁷⁸²

“The international media was harder to control. What they did was they created a cordon in Matabeleland North so that we were not supposed to travel throughout

⁷⁸¹ Anderson, B. 1983. *Imagined Communities*. London and New York: Verso, 35. In the summative words of the author: “It is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.”, 6.

⁷⁸² Interview: JN1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 29/03/07 – (Ndebele teacher and activist working for the Catholic Commission on Peace and Justice CCJP in the 1980s).

Matabeleland North. And all of us... *it was forbidden for us to go into the rural areas there, it was forbidden.*"⁷⁸³

When it came to freedom of speech, the ZANU-PF applied a mixed strategy of inundating the public with a barrage of official narrative scripts that mediated 'reality' to the nation and fear-mongering messages directed at all who would venture into disagreement with the 'Truth' of ZANU-PF's position of power or government policy. Playing on the word 'expression', one respondent quipped: "But truly, the freedom of expression *after* expression does not exist."⁷⁸⁴

"...one is the state media, which then they were given a voice that had to be told. And it meant that *The Chronicle* newspaper, the state-owned newspaper in Bulawayo, was not reporting the violence that was happening, you know, it was just not to be reported. *But the state media was giving the kind of ZANU-PF view of what was happening.*"⁷⁸⁵

"I mean you [in South Africa] don't have a situation whereby it's one man's word against the entire country. So that is the issue. I also remember there was some stage...in the 80s [when] Mugabe also had Prime Minister's question time on the radio. I don't know if that was live or if it was pre-recorded, but they always said it's live and people are phoning in, *but I had never heard anybody ask him a tough question.*"⁷⁸⁶

"So you basically just focused on those things rather than on all their negatives going around you. And you sort-of developed an ostrich in the sand type of thing where you didn't ever criticize or argue against what was presented to you in *The Herald*. And *The Herald* basically was *beyond debate*. You had this sense that the journalists were just being very neutral."⁷⁸⁷

"...the ZANU PF government has relentlessly violated citizens '...freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart ideas and information without interference...' (Section 20 (1) of the Constitution of Zimbabwe). Out of political

⁷⁸³ Interview: AM1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 10/08/06 – (White American Journalist who lived in Zimbabwe from 1980 until he was deported by the ZANU-PF government).

⁷⁸⁴ Interview: JN1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 29/03/07 – (Ndebele teacher and activist working for the Catholic Commission on Peace and Justice CCJP in the 1980s).

⁷⁸⁵ Interview: AM1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 10/08/06 – (White American Journalist who lived in Zimbabwe from 1980 until he was deported by the ZANU-PF government).

⁷⁸⁶ Interview: DL1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 11/08/06 – (Ndebele Journalist employed as a business editor for a prominent newspaper).

⁷⁸⁷ Interview: TM1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 01/11/07 – (Shona Businessman whose relative was a prominent leader in the ZANU-PF government).

expedience the democratic principles upon which the Constitution is based are being contemptuously disregarded.”⁷⁸⁸

The consequences of this onslaught by the ZANU-PF government to promote state-owned media and to repress the independent media were myriad. Firstly, this campaign of censorship produced a wide-spread ignorance and indifference toward the plight of the Matabele people among the majority living in Mashonaland:

“Well the justification of Gukurahundi, not only then, but even now, but I want you to know that then, the impression that was given to the rest of the nation was that there was a *war* in Matabeleland...And they didn’t even call it a civil war. They said that there were people in Matabeleland who were bent to dislodge a legitimate government. And therefore it was the responsibility of the government to defend its position and the people of Zimbabwe. *So, with the domination of the media, government-sponsored media, both of electronic and print media, the majority of Shonas had no idea of what was actually happening.* They actually believed that there was a war in Matabeleland.”⁷⁸⁹

“[W]hen the new government took over, one of the issues or one of the things that it quickly did was to quickly nationalize the media into [a] state media. Even sadly up to today we still have [that] in Zimbabwe. So from that point of view that they now controlled the state media, and they deployed the Fifth Brigade into a section of the country; *information did not quickly filter to other parts of the country, to the extent of people being [aware] of what was taking place in Matabeleland.*”⁷⁹⁰

Secondly, the integrity of the state-sanctioned information sector was severely compromised in the minds of most Matabeleland residents:

“Yeah, people of Matabeleland are scorning that [media]. People in Matabeleland are not interested in buying *The Chronicle* that much, people are not interested in listening to the radio or the TV, most people here are listening to foreign stations, which I think is not right. They should be listening to Zimbabwean TV. *And it simply tells you that the propaganda coming out of Zimbabwean TV is not palatable as far as people in Matabeleland are concerned.* I think this part of the world could be having more [satellite] dishes on their roofs than any other, to try and pick up waves from elsewhere; DSTV and other things and they have no interest in their own local home. And to me that is a serious thing.”⁷⁹¹

⁷⁸⁸ Hondora, T. 2002. ‘Zimbabwe’ in *So this is Democracy? State of the media in Southern Africa 2001*. Windhoek, Namibia: The Media Institute of Southern Africa, 156. Freedom of expression is defined as, “[A] basic human right, vital to an individual’s personal development, his political consciousness, and the participation in the conduct of the public affairs of this country”, (p.156).

⁷⁸⁹ Interview: RM2, Johannesburg, South Africa - 26/02/08 – (Shona NGO peace activist advocating for trauma healing and reconciliation among rural Matabeleland communities and survivors of Gukurahundi violence).

⁷⁹⁰ Interview: SD1, Johannesburg, South Africa - 18/08/06 – (Shona Human Rights Lawyer).

⁷⁹¹ Interview: PK1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 30/03/07 – (A prominent member of Ndebele Royal Family).

Thirdly, the essential issues of debate surrounding the Matabeleland violence were ignored or deflected by the state-owned media who had interest in upholding the ideological agenda of the ZANU-PF government as their primary allegiance. The core issues that were skirted in the ZANU-PF clamp down on media were such matters as the interrogation into the actual motivations of the ‘dissidents’, the true breach of state security, and why power-sharing arrangements were not more readily engaged with from the beginning. A case in point was the ZANU-PF’s continual default mode of sourcing current conflicts in historical racist conspiracy rhetoric:

“ZBC’s (Zimbabwe Broadcasting Company) conceptualisation on ‘nation’ was simplistic. It was based on race: The White and Black race. Based on those terms, the world was reduced to two nations – the white nation and the black nation and these stood as mortal rivals. The nation was called Africa. Whites were presented as Europeans who could only belong to Europe just as Africa was for Africans and Zimbabwe for Zimbabweans... Amongst the most damaging aspects of the telling of this national narrative through a series of dualisms (black/white, British/Zimbabwean), and compressions of the various aspects of the anti-colonial struggle into a single field of force, has been the enormous loss of complexity of the colonial encounter.”⁷⁹²

This played itself out in ZANU-PF refusing to account for its aggressive and excessive violence meted out against fellow black compatriots. Instead, the state-controlled media would frequently divert attention away from this anomaly and blame the dissident resistance on third-force operatives coming from the white racist Pretoria (South Africa) regime. One interview respondent who attempted to expose the atrocities being committed by the Fifth Brigade against the black civilian population in Matabeleland was accused of being racist:

“I’m talking about [the] Friends of Zimbabwe thinking that I and others are peddling and stirring up trouble, *trying to propagate the old Rhodesian rift, of rivalry between the Shona and the Ndebele*, which I found very disturbing and hurtful because I had no such agenda whatsoever. I was doing Human Rights reporting showing that there was, you know, innocent civilians being slaughtered and beaten and starved.”⁷⁹³

⁷⁹² Raftopoulos, B. 2004. “Nation, Race and History in Zimbabwean Politics”. A paper presented at the University of Edinburgh’s Centre of African Studies International Conference on *States, Borders and Nations: Negotiating Citizenship in Africa*. May 2004.

⁷⁹³ Interview: AM1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 10/08/06 – (White American Journalist who lived in Zimbabwe from 1980 until he was deported by the ZANU-PF government).

The restriction of media in Matabeleland served a number of purposes. First and most obviously, it provided the means for the ZANU-PF to hide its excesses of violence and present its own sterile account of the Matabeleland conflict. Secondly, and maybe even more importantly, by restricting the flow of information through the media, the ZANU-PF denied the people of Matabeleland an opportunity to build community; to experience the empowerment of solidarity both internally (victims voices were silenced) and externally (the outside world could not empathise with the Ndebele cause because they were not aware). The continuity of the ZANU-PF's strangulation on media expression is evident in Brian Raftopoulos' depiction of media restrictions twenty years after the height of Gukurahundi:

“As Zimbabweans listen to the radio, watch the television and read the daily newspapers, all controlled by the ruling party, they are being ‘informed’ about what it means to be a ‘good Zimbabwean,’ and a ‘genuine African’. They are also being told who is the ‘enemy’ within and without and advised to confront such ‘enemies’ with ruthless exclusion if necessary. For the present this political assault has seriously closed down the spaces for alternative debates around citizenship and national belonging.”⁷⁹⁴

7.4.4. Discipline through Leadership Domination

Moving beyond its control of historical indoctrination, political manipulation and the restriction of media, the ZANU-PF continued to extend its surveillance network into realms of business, civil society and even religious affairs in Matabeleland. Understanding the organisational dynamics represented here is critical. In a universal sense, organisational culture as an impersonal corporate entity performs a robust *disciplinary* role on the individuals who may work within its system. The ‘worldview’ that dominates an organisation, its policies and bureaucracies becomes the *regulatory* force over the employees’ behaviours. The mind-set and values behind this ‘organisational culture’ are best transmitted through the positions of leadership within a given agency. Thus, it is no surprise that the ZANU-PF embarked on a precise strategy of planting its devoted members in leadership posts across the Matabeleland region in the early 1980s. Most top government, business, education, civil society, and even many

⁷⁹⁴ Raftopoulos, B. 2004. “Nation, Race and History in Zimbabwean Politics”. A paper presented at the University of Edinburgh’s Centre of African Studies International Conference on *States, Borders and Nations: Negotiating Citizenship in Africa*. May 2004.

Church leadership positions were filled with Shona-speaking ZANU-PF loyalists (often referred to as the process of ‘shona-isation’) and many Ndebele expressed discontent with what appeared to be a systematic effort to exclude them from the public domain.

“...that is why some of the people [Ndebele] think they should make violence so that they gain lot of things. Actually there is lot of scandal that has taken place here with these people [ZANU-PF]. *They...even in Bulawayo here, all the positions, big positions, are held by the Shona.* And they are continuing to do that, they think it’s a rightful thing, but it will explode one day. Not today, even after twenty or forty or fifty years, this will come up if they continue. But, if they are clever enough, it’s better to come down to other people and say ‘we apologise, let’s build our country’, that is what we want.”⁷⁹⁵

“Go around [and] check who is heading what; you’ll never find ... very few places you will find an Ndebele-speaking person or from Matabeleland. By-and-large all the parastatals ... the whole system is like the president has to be Shona, the vice maybe Ndebele... most of these structures, you’ll find that in government. *It’s rare that you’ll find Ndebele-speaking person in the top leadership except for one reason or the other.*”⁷⁹⁶

One research respondent (Ndebele) relayed his personal experience of discrimination at the workplace:

“Oh yes, it was all Shonas that I worked with, yeah. I can give you my examples that I worked at The National Oil Company of Zimbabwe. I worked in government; they removed me from the National Oil Company of Zimbabwe because they kept on asking ‘*how can Ndebele assume such a position when we have got our Shona people?*’ I was the Finance and Administration Director, the number two man at The National Oil Company of Zimbabwe. I was seconded to The National Oil Company of Zimbabwe because of the corruption that takes place there. And so then it was decided that we second our own people from the government, at least [those] we can trust whilst we recruit permanent staff. So I was seconded. This is how I ended up [in] a post in The National Oil Company of Zimbabwe. I use to do work in the Ministry of Finance in the State, while we second[ed] someone of the Ministry of Finance to assume financial affairs at the National Oil Company of Zimbabwe. And because I am a Chartered Secretary then I could combine financial administration as well as the company secretarial duties, which is administration really. And then there were five of us that were seconded there. I did very well at the National Oil Company of Zimbabwe and I was the only one that was picked and then I was appointed to a substantive positing, without an interview. The others were not considered. I was picked by the Shonas; among Shonas when I was there, but on the strength of the fact that I

⁷⁹⁵ Interview: MS2, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 11/09/07 - (Ndebele male, rural farmer from Tsholotsho, Matabeleland and primary survivor of Gukurahundi violence).

⁷⁹⁶ Interview: AN1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 12/09/07 – (Ndebele Church leader and Peace activist).

used to work very hard...until one day one guy who was in the army wanted a position came to confess to me to say 'the reason why I victimised you or I rall[ied] people to victimize you, is because I wanted your post'.”⁷⁹⁷

Discrimination was not only experienced by the Ndebele. It has coloured the interactions between the people of Matabeleland and their Shona counterparts and neighbours even in the current environment of Zimbabwe. The following account shows the emotive, seemingly traumatic link between the Gukurahundi violence of the 1980s and a young Shona man being appointed to a business leadership position in Matabeleland in 2007 (27 years later):

“Look at the water crisis that [we] are facing [in Matabeleland], the split and water take-over by ZENO. One gentleman came to my office, he says ‘we went there [ZENO] and simply told him [Shona leader] he was a young fellow, I think a baby at the time of Gukurahundi’; they said ‘*you are Gukurahundi. So, the people that did that thing have not come. They’ve sent you now. You are coming to do **another** Gukurahundi.* So you also, we take you to be one [a perpetrator of Gukurahundi]’. The man was obviously very angry. But, what is important is that the memory is still very fresh, and it hasn’t gone.”⁷⁹⁸

The ramifications of the ZANU-PF leadership domination stretched beyond the *private domain* of ethnic humiliation, arbitrary demotion, or lack of employment opportunities, it extended into the collective psyche of the people of Matabeleland in that it impacted their corporate sense of *ownership* over the local governance and civil society structures; the *public domain* that existed to serve and enhance their livelihood. The disciplinary genius of this ZANU-PF (mostly Shona) leadership control was encapsulated in the Matabeleland communities’ disempowerment to meaningfully engage in the official civil affairs of their own geographical locality. This *distancing* of the Matabeleland citizenry from the intimate connection to the fabric of their external socio-political networks is easily identifiable in the language used in the transcriptions above. The bifurcated identification labels of ‘these people’ when referring to the other ethnic grouping, the referencing to ‘our Shona people’ and the vivid words of distortion that merged the ‘Shona’ and ‘Gukurahundi violence’ as one and the same thing leave hints as

⁷⁹⁷ Interview: FN1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 26/10/07 – (Ndebele Finance Manager and former employee of the ZANU-PF Ministry of Finance and the National Oil Company of Zimbabwe in the early 1980s).

⁷⁹⁸ Interview: PN1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 30/03/07 – (Ndebele historian, author, researcher and archivist).

to this distancing effect. The disassociation by the Ndebele from the social contracting that defines and governs functional community relationships in a local context has left behind a profound sense of dislocation for the ordinary Matabele; leaving in its wake a paralysing state of disengagement.

7.4.5. Discipline through Development Constriction

“But, in Matabeleland, this is a region which exists for them to plunder, to pillage, to exploit resources and not to plough them back for development purposes.”⁷⁹⁹

Matabeleland has always lagged in development in comparison to most parts of Mashonaland. The sourcing of this retarded development is multifarious and often elusive. It appears that this denial of development had its origins in the time of Gukurahundi when the dissident violence coincided with a severe drought in Matabeleland between the years of 1982-84. At that time, ZANU-PF refused to allow food shipments into certain parts of the region for ‘security purposes’.

“You know, another thing that happened was they closed off our food deliveries to Matabeleland-North and particularly to Matabeleland-South during an era of drought, when people were starving. You couldn’t even say that these were people who had been caught doing [wrong] it was the overall population.”⁸⁰⁰

What transpired at this time was the *politicisation of emergency aid* which led to an experiential logic embraced by the people of Matabeleland that they were being *punished* for ending up on the wrong side of the political divide. The politics of emergency aid, food security, and development resource distribution have continued to plague Matabeleland for the last two decades.

“You have a situation where, whilst the physical brutalization, the physical killings have somewhat stopped, we still experience a genocide which is being silently waged against the Ndebele people; being denied opportunities, being denied power, being denied resources, being denied schooling, being denied access to water, to food, to education, and so on. And they [ZANU-PF] are creating a nation of helpless people, of illiterates, of uneducated people so that they will be able to manipulate us.”⁸⁰¹

⁷⁹⁹ Interview: CM1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 29/03/07 - (Ndebele Traditionalist and Cultural Activist advocating for a separate Ndebele nation).

⁸⁰⁰ Interview: AM1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 10/08/06 – (White American Journalist who lived in Zimbabwe from 1980 until he was deported by the ZANU-PF government).

⁸⁰¹ Interview: CM1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 29/03/07 - (Ndebele Traditionalist and Cultural Activist advocating for a separate Ndebele nation).

In an attempt to understand this development quandary, some respondents fixed blame on poor governance and structural bureaucracy:

“No development... if we ask of a Minister of a certain post and say ‘We want a school’, they say ‘Go to the Minister of Education’. For road, ‘Go to the Minister of Transport’, etc, etc...but us as Matabeleland [we] don’t have any Ministers, [so] how can development come? MPs don’t have any assessment of a development. The only thing to the MPs, he must write a Project Proposal, to the Minister, asking for funds. Then when those proposals come in, in a group, they first get assessed and are given priority. But when there is discussion needed on sticky or difficult decisions, then there is no Minister to represent and talk to about it. *So how can development come?* We just have an MP only, just send the letter there, leaves the letter there, comes back to us and says ‘I am waiting for a response’. After five years he’s gone, they bring another one; he falls in the same category again. That’s the only system.”⁸⁰²

Other interviewees placed the responsibility for this lack of development on the absence of political will and/or the capacity to provide service delivery in a time-efficient and effective manner:

“Then you look at the road development of we could mention; Tsholotsho [to] Bulawayo is still a strip road, Bulawayo to Nkayi has taken now almost twenty years for that to be completed, Bulawayo [to] Kezi is not yet complete. And these roads are supposed to bring in development; there’s nothing. The NUST (National University of Science and Technology) is not yet completed. I don’t know how many projects have gone through that varsity. The district hospital is not yet completed. And then you talk about the laboratories; how many schools have got reasonably-equipped laboratories so that the students can really do reasonable science subjects? Those questions are begging an answer. Lupane University is still in the pipeline, the Gwayi-Shangani Dam is still in the pipeline. *How many years now?* This year is our worst drought year. The Zambezi project, I don’t know. There is [the] Mtshabezi dam here which has got water which is lying [still]; do we have pipeline to connect it to the Bulawayo water reticulation system? Then you talk of development (laughs). I can go on.”⁸⁰³

Still others attribute the development neglect to an entrenched system of corruption and graft:

“...it’s called ‘Small and Medium Enterprises’, they have monies that are dispersed to various provinces; you have a situation where, in Matabeleland, despite the fact that there are three provinces in Matabeleland (Matabeleland North, South and Bulawayo), you have only one office that is servicing the three.

⁸⁰² Interview: AN2, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 12/09/07 – (Ndebele Ex-ZIPRA Soldier).

⁸⁰³ Interview: JN1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 29/03/07 – (Ndebele teacher and activist working for the Catholic Commission on Peace and Justice CCJP in the 1980s).

But if you go to Mashonaland, within Harare, we have two offices, (Harare-urban and Harare-rural); then we have Marondera, Bindura, Chinoi all servicing Mashonaland. Then, some people are even sponsored to come in Matabeleland, who are from Harare, to come and make the applications in Matabeleland, and then they receive the money on behalf of Matabeleland. When statistics are written, when you look at the records, *you'll think that Matabeleland received a particular percentage, but it would have been given to some one who came from outside Matabeleland*, received the money and went back to Harare or Masvingo or any other place. So this is a very dangerous situation.”⁸⁰⁴

“You see, ZANU-PF is being supported by a few people, *and mainly it is relatives of those that are in power...the relatives of Mugabe in power who are benefiting, you see, out of the corruption* that is taking place in government; in allocating seeds, in allocating fertilizer, food, and the like.”⁸⁰⁵

The most frequently cited example of this development deprivation is the much needed Zambezi Water Project that would greatly assist the arid Matabeleland region in dealing with its frequent drought problems. Unfortunately, this has become a decadal project beleaguered with financial and time constraints and as yet has not materialised. Many Matebele see this as ZANU-PF expediency, using these delays in development to *discipline* the region for its lack of political solidarity in the past. In an effort to verify this accusation, a number of interviews sited the fact that the government completed a water project of similar size and cost for the city of Mutare (Mashonaland) in a short time compared to the prolonged Zambezi Water Project.⁸⁰⁶

“I was in government myself. We saw the allocation of monies, the projects, the aid organisations coming in. Very little, next to nothing, was ever going to Matabeleland. If you look at the roads, the schools, the clinics, the hospitals, nothing is taking place in that particular part of the country. *Look at the water situation, you know, Mutare was favoured with the construction of water, I can't remember the name of the project that was there. But Matabeleland has never had any significant [water project]*, it is a dry area. One would expect that to see something happen but [nothing], for a long time, since Independence.”⁸⁰⁷

⁸⁰⁴ Interview: CM1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 29/03/07 - (Ndebele Traditionalist and Cultural Activist advocating for a separate Ndebele nation).

⁸⁰⁵ Interview: FN1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 26/10/07 – (Ndebele Finance Manager and former employee of the ZANU-PF Ministry of Finance and the National Oil Company of Zimbabwe in the early 1980s).

⁸⁰⁶ Musemwa, M. 2006. “Disciplining a ‘Dissident’ City: Hydropolitics in the City of Bulawayo, Matabeleland, Zimbabwe, 1980-1994”. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 32 (2): 250.

⁸⁰⁷ Interview: FN1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 26/10/07 – (Ndebele Finance Manager and former employee of the ZANU-PF Ministry of Finance and the National Oil Company of Zimbabwe in the early 1980s).

“...he [Mugabe] has continued to neglect Matabeleland in terms of development. And companies continue to relocate to Mashonaland, to Harare. Not only that, but there is a need for water, *and the Zambezi Water project [is] one that is a glaring example, where, if the government was concerned about Matabeleland, or Bulawayo, they should have done something about it.* And these are issues that are outstanding in Matabeleland. And they continue to cause problems because people are not convinced that ZANU-PF government and Shonas would accept Ndebeles as part of Zimbabwe.”⁸⁰⁸

“And even though Matabeleland was always the worst hit by drought ... *and I think that was part of a stick used to punish Matabeleland in the beginning, in that they had never ever had their water projects approved...* And yet Matabeleland was worse hit and it sure didn’t make sense to me that year in year out people die of drought and nothing really changed for those sort of people. You had two water projects: Lake Kyle and Lake Kariba, which were developed during Smith’s regime and before. Why didn’t ZANU-PF do those sorts of things for the Ndebele people? So yeah, you do get that sense that it [Matabeleland] was actually being *punished...*”⁸⁰⁹

Thus, in the violations of dominating leadership positions in the public and private sectors and withholding development as a form of political punishment of the Matabeleland populace, the ZANU-PF harnessed a *totalising* function of discipline. The descriptive word ‘totalising’ is purposefully chosen in the sense that this development discipline impacted the whole person. It destroyed prospects for both material and social *capital accumulation* in Matabeleland. In exercising the denial of development as an instrument of discipline in Matabeleland, the ZANU-PF not only ensured that the Matabele population suffered physical hunger, thirst, sickness and disease; but it ensconced a psycho-social suffering by undermining the sense of collective pride and corporate *identity in community* achievement, and by denying the Matabele people the dignity of being able to provide a social and material *legacy* for the generations to come.

7.5. Legitimacy Narratives and the Violence System: A ‘Forensic Audit’

By attaching its legitimacy to violence, the ZANU-PF became the progenitors of a violence system that took on a trajectory of its own. This violence system became larger

⁸⁰⁸ Interview: RM2, Johannesburg, South Africa - 26/02/08 – (Shona NGO peace activist advocating for trauma healing and reconciliation among rural Matabeleland communities and survivors of Gukurahundi violence).

⁸⁰⁹ Interview: TM1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 01/11/07 – (Shona Businessman whose relative was a prominent leader in the ZANU-PF government).

than life, rising above powerful leaders and political brilliance, defying rationality and ideology, and acting above the Law. Although the ZANU-PF master-minded a highly organised violence, violence by its very nature eludes a completing order. It is drawn to the centrifugal pull of chaos and disorder, and as such the systematic violence of the ZANU-PF government eventually became unwieldy. It was besieged by incongruence, riddled with inconsistencies and as a result certain salient ironies were set into motion in Matabeleland. This section explores a number of the elemental components that nurtured, as well as exposed the paradoxical essence of the ZANU-PF violence system.

7.5.1. The Regenerative Nature of Violence

Buried within every act of ZANU-PF state-organized violence in Matabeleland there were multiple narratives of personal trauma and political revenge awaiting birth in order to raise their texts of protest. As the ZANU-PF violence kept reinventing itself in cycles of endless justifications, it was in turn continually confronted with the dissenting voices of the victimised. In response to the victims' cries, the ZANU-PF perpetrators had to grant themselves *amnesty* over and over again. In a show of ceremonial, public *absolution*, top ZANU-PF politicians and the state-run media issued the following sampling of statements:

“In circumstances in which we find ourselves, tempers rise in the police because of the long hours which they work. They find themselves acting rather over-enthusiastically. We must sympathise with them rather than begin to criticise them...What the courts regard as torture now might not have been torture in the days of Ian Smith...but because we are more liberal, we have a democratic order, any little scratch...is interpreted as torture. I think we must feel for those whose duty it is to give maximum security to the nation.”⁸¹⁰

“There are people in rural Matabeleland who will swear that the Five Brigade was sent into the region to wipe out the Ndebeles. Most of them will confess, on close interrogation, that this is what they have been told by their politicians. The Five Brigade was sent into the region to deal with the dissident menace. Its members garnered a reputation for a type of brutality not normally associated with the regular army of Zimbabwe...Fuelled by political propaganda, this anti-Ndebele image of the Five Brigade took a firm grip of the imagination of the peasants.”⁸¹¹

⁸¹⁰ Yap, 2001: 227, taken from: Assembly Debates, vol. 7, 13 July 1983, cols 397-98, (Quote by Prime Minister Robert Mugabe).

⁸¹¹ ‘Excited by the Five’ (1983) *The Chronicle (Bulawayo)* 30 October.

“If some innocent people are caught up it is regrettable but it is not a Zimbabwean peculiarity that in a conflict situation some innocent individuals get some bruising.”⁸¹²

However, in a cruel twist of fate, these acts of *impunity*, far from breaking cyclical violence only served to keep violence alive in the offender’s conscience and in the victim’s memory; resulting in a broken society. The generational transmission of the twin poisons of perpetrator *guilt* and victim’s *revenge* in Matabeleland are given witness to in the following transcriptions:

“It’s still there. I mean for some of us who are healed we can feel it, you can see it in others, like you may go to Hillbrow [South Africa], go to some drinking places and you sit and the Ndebele guys are talking, you know, and he’ll openly tell you ‘if I were to meet a Shona guy here I would kill him’, and he means it. So it’s still an anger which is there... So I think that’s a problem. The reason why there hasn’t been any closure on the issue is that most people don’t know where their relatives are buried, they just disappeared and that was it. They don’t know; people were buried in mass graves. So that is the real issue why the anger will continue. *And with time it’s passed on to generations* you know. They sit down and they talk to their kids and say ‘you see ...’, like my father would always say ‘you know ..’, whenever we are sitting and watching television and Mugabe appears and he’ll say ‘this man is very evil, this man is very evil’. And if you as a kid always hear your parents say that, you’ll tend to believe it, it must be true. And he says ‘no, the entire clan, the entire tribe of these people, they are terrible.’”⁸¹³

“He’s [Mugabe] trying to woo people to follow him and say Nkomo did this so you people in Matabeleland must do the same that Joshua Nkomo did. That is what he’s after. Actually, in Matabeleland we know what we are doing, I think. We are not going to be hood-winked by people who don’t know what ruling of people is. We are just step-watching. There is a day where this [will] come to an end, but we did not want to retaliate. But what we wanted, we wanted these people to say that that was a mistake and we apologise, but they don’t want to do that. *So we are watching. Even our children will just keep this.* There is a time where the time bomb will have to do something in this country, but we are not praying for that because we want peace and [to] develop the country, together. But if they persist in doing what they are doing, there is no alternative. I think clever people say ‘*history repeats itself*’. So what they are doing, they will get it, sometime. But we need not be in a hurry.”⁸¹⁴

⁸¹² Spring, 1986: 117. (Quote by Minister of State Security, Sydney Sekeramayi).

⁸¹³ Interview: DL1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 11/08/06 - (Ndebele Journalist employed as a business editor for a prominent newspaper).

⁸¹⁴ Interview: MS2, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 11/09/07 - (Ndebele male, rural farmer from Tsholotsho, Matabeleland and primary survivor of Gukurahundi violence).

The regenerative irony of violence echoes in these words of then Prime Minister, Robert Mugabe: “Those who take to violence deserve punishment through violence because those who wield the sword should perish by the sword.”⁸¹⁵ While Mugabe used this proverb in arrogant defence of the ZANU-PF campaign against dissidence, as opposed to ‘smashing’ the resistance through violence which was the goal of the ZANU-PF, this ancient idiom provoked just the contrary response; a desire for violent revenge in the Matabele youth as indicated by the last transcription above. Thus, in the wisdom of the sages of old, “Violence *begets* (gives birth to) violence.”⁸¹⁶ This self-fulfilling prophetic utterance seems to have revisited full-circle in the Matabeleland context.

7.5.2. Sacred Violence

In his seminal work on the *Violence and the Sacred*⁸¹⁷, French social-anthropologist Rene Girard posits the idea that for the most part the modern nation has its origins in acts of creative violence (defensive or offensive) and as such violence remains foundational as the *modes operandi* in the affairs of the state. The challenge then becomes how to account for this state-sanctioned violence both internally and externally. Girard maintains that this justification is achieved when violence is cast in sacred ideology, symbolic worship ritual and sacrificial ceremony. The redemption and sanctification that is necessary for a culture of violence to continually be purged and consecrated from one generation to the next is necessarily grounded in a sacred space. Humankind has always gravitated to ‘the sacred’ as a place to locate its *legitimacy*. Religion has, and continues to indirectly function as a motivational rationalisation of existential meaning, life purpose, social order, and political power in many societies. In its continual search for legitimacy, the ZANU-PF capitalised on the ‘sacred’ as one of multiple means for defending its promotion of violence.

⁸¹⁵ ‘State to step up War on Banditry’, (1982) *The Herald (Harare)* 18 September.

⁸¹⁶ Unknown source. The earliest reference found to the exact phrase is from [The Sham Squire](#) by William J. Fitzpatrick printed in 1866 but citing a letter from 1798. A slightly later reference but from a book printed earlier is [Alvan Lamson's Sermons](#) of 1857 which has the words right after a quote from Jesus about living by the sword (Matthew 26:52), probably explaining the popularity of the phrase. Retrieved from the web 27/07/09.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Reference_desk/Archives/Humanities/2006_October_24#Origin_of_the_phrase_.27violence_begets_violence.27

⁸¹⁷ Girard, R. 1972. *Violence and the Sacred*, (Translated by Patrick Gregory). Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press.

In the last chapter, this research highlighted the use of *spiritual intrigue* (including the consultation of spirit mediums and the sighting of Tongogara's ghost) by the ZANU-PF government and the media in order to propagate narratives of political loyalty (see Section 6.5.1., Chapter 6). Taking this further, this section explores how the sacred was employed to vindicate the overall application of violence endorsed by the ZANU-PF government. During the Matabeleland massacres, the Fifth Brigade often used strong Christian Biblical imagery to elucidate its power mixed with threats of severe violence. A classic example of this Scriptural parody is found in the words of Minister Emmerson Mnangagwa in a speech he delivered to a rural community who were forced to attend a rally in Matabeleland North in April 1983:

“Blessed are they who will follow the path of the government laws, for their days on earth shall be increased. But woe unto those who will choose the path of collaboration with dissidents for we will certainly shorten their stay on earth.”⁸¹⁸

This statement is both stilted and haughty in linguistic style, and sacrilegious in content. It is formulated around the liturgical verse of Jesus' recorded teaching on what is commonly known as the *Sermon on the Mount*.⁸¹⁹ For those familiar with these words of Jesus, they make-up the cornerstone of his teaching on ethics for Christian living and morality, particularly as it relates to active nonviolence as a lifestyle ideology and practice. Thus, once again with gross hyperbole an official spokesperson of the ZANU-PF government invokes the sacred in its exertion of power through violence. Embedded in this verbiage is the rhythmic insinuation that ZANU-PF has been endowed with the absolute, Divine right to take or give life as it so chooses.

Building on this sacred 'right', this study elicited a curious response regarding the ZANU-PF and its explication of violence by means of sacred connections:

“Mahoso [newspaper columnist] wrote a piece saying that the legitimacy of revolutionary ZANU does not spring from elections. He went back to David Lan [author]. But he always says, even David Lan was forced to admit that...main argument [legitimacy does not come from elections]. He went back to David Lan on the contract between the spirit mediums and the guerrillas, *the bringing*

⁸¹⁸ Yap, 2001: 228.

⁸¹⁹ *The Holy Bible* (New International Version). 1973. The Gospels of Matthew 5: 1-11. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishers, 886.

*together of youth and ancestral wisdom; the legitimacy of ZANU-PF lies in that.*⁸²⁰

What we have here is the ZANU-PF's effort to take their revolutionary legitimacy out of the evaluative grip of democratic and electoral frameworks and instead source it in the twinning together of the revolutionary passion of the youth and the age-old wisdom of the spiritual realm (spirit mediums). In doing this, ZANU-PF attempted to resuscitate its legitimacy by recalling its youthful lustre characterised by innocence, purity and unquestioning revolutionary zeal, thereby dismissing the fomenting opposition stirring among the matured adult citizenry who no longer accepted the ZANU-PF's dominant political discourse without question. At the same time ZANU-PF lodged its revolutionary mission in an 'other-worldly' authority; the 'living-dead' (spirit ancestors who exist beyond the human realm), and in so doing, assuming one subscribes to a spiritual worldview, they left precious little room for anyone to question their legitimacy. Thus, by insisting that their identity and image be grounded in 'youthfulness' the ZANU-PF froze itself in a historical snap-shot of eternal juvenile idealism refusing to acknowledge the complexities of its own evolutionary maturation as a struggle movement. Also, by alluding to their origination being rooted in the sacred, the ZANU-PF attempted to imbue their *power* with an external, supernatural essence, and to source their ultimate *legitimacy* in the mysterious unknown, thereby suspending the judgement of that legitimacy outside of the parameters of the known, the measurable, and the debatable.

7.5.3. Violence and Hierarchy

The violence system thrives on *hierarchy*. Hierarchy is typified by exacting 'chains of command', authority ranking, class and power differentiation, unquestioning obedience, and indirect, one-way communication flows. Under armed revolutionary circumstances hierarchical military structures are of the essence in order to accomplish the mission of a violent, quick and complete change. However, if a revolution is to be authentic, the violent power of hierarchical systems must be diffused and decentralisation must occur in order to give 'power to the people'. ZANU-PF assumed it could retain its

⁸²⁰ Interview: TR1, Oxford, UK – 21/10/08 – (White British professor, researcher and widely published author who is a leading authority on the history of Zimbabwe).

legitimacy as the ruling party and yet continue to act with a highly militarised hierarchy which proved to be an untenable goal. One respondent referred to how ZANU-PF's power and self-proclaimed legitimacy were apparently not negotiable:

“So I think it was about political power but it was also about a message saying ‘*don't question our authority*’. We will run and you just follow’...And the government's message throughout about the dissidents and Joshua Nkomo and everything was ‘there is nothing to discuss’. It was just a question of ‘they don't question the way we run things’.”⁸²¹

While the ZANU-PF officially gave ‘lip-service’ to upholding democratic principles, there was never a sense that the ruling party leadership was genuinely committed to carrying out a democracy mandate. This may explain why the ZANU-PF has found it so difficult to truly nurture the space of freedom where citizens can actively participate in governing structures in safety and without fear of reprisals or threats of repression. In the best of estimations this vacillation between revolutionary autocracy and mass-based democracy could have been attributed to honest leadership confusion and the conundrums of post-independence ideological quagmire. However, in the worst of scenarios it gives credence to the notion that from its inception the ZANU-PF has slowly been tightening its stranglehold on the *space of choice* for all Zimbabweans; the choice of media, choice of political affiliation, choice to publicly express dissenting opinions, and choice to be actively engaged in their own development. In her well-executed dissertation on Matabeleland, Katri PohjolainenYap concluded that:

“Thus, citizens' multiple political party choice became a hindrance to the hegemonic plans of the ruling party. To address this, it is argued, the ruling party needed to limit choice both in terms of discourse space and in the selection of political allegiance...Furthermore, it was emphasised that the ruling party's position was *the* politically correct choice both in terms of security and national unity...The option available is seen as a *space of choice* assumed and practised by citizens to exercise free political thought and democratic rights. However, it is argued that this space of choice was contested, as the ruling party intended to implement a one-party state and strengthen the party's power position. The contestation of this space where citizens select their political allegiance is concluded to be the *site of struggle* in the conflict.”⁸²²

⁸²¹ Interview: AM1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 10/08/06 – (White American Journalist who lived in Zimbabwe from 1980 until he was deported by the ZANU-PF government).

⁸²² Yap, 2001: 17-18.

Hence, the hierarchical scaffolding that supported the violence system and the shrinking of the spatial forums which allowed people to engage in political choice were intimately linked together in Matabeleland.

7.5.4. Violence and Competition

*“If you want to follow it, the choice is yours. And [if] you don’t want to, just stay away from it. As long as you don’t open your big mouth and try and create something else; there’s competition.”*⁸²³

The violence system is a breeding ground for *competition*. Structural violence is inherently driven by the force of possessive power; the need to lord *over* people, circumstances or territories. Ultimate violence means elimination of all that threatens, thereby giving the illusion of power over life and death. However, the violence system becomes null and void, rendered completely ineffective when confronted with the ethic of power diversification; sharing power-*with* or granting power-*to* other people.⁸²⁴ Conceptions of violence as competition assist in understanding why the ZAPU and ZANU political parties and their armed wings were so circumspect to join forces under one united front for Liberation, and why any oppositional voice of criticism became intolerable to the ZANU-PF and its decided grip on power after independence.

In the Matabeleland context, ‘competitive violence’ was manifest in various gradations of interpersonal and intergroup conflicts. Some research respondents situated this competitive violence in the interpersonal conflicts between the personalities and ambitions of Joshua Nkomo and Robert Mugabe:

“But at the end of the day, in 2002 when Mugabe was addressing rally in Lupane, he said it more than twice that [the] massacre of Matabeleland people was *an act of madness, between me and Joshua Nkomo*. Then, I can’t understand why he’s saying ‘and Joshua Nkomo’, because Mugabe was commanding the army. So if you’re saying ‘and Joshua Nkomo’, I don’t know where Nkomo fits in there, because he was the victim.”⁸²⁵

⁸²³ Interview: DN2, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 30/03/07- (Ndebele retired journalist and one of the editors for the state-run newspaper the Chronicle during the 1980s).

⁸²⁴ Adapted from nonviolence course materials prepared by Dr. Lisa Schaech, Professor of Peace-building at Eastern Mennonite University, Summer Peace-building Institute, May 1998.

⁸²⁵ Interview: RM1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 14/09/06 – (Ndebele former security officer for opposition party and survivor of severe torture as a political prisoner under the ZANU-PF government).

The following excerpt taken from a personal letter written by Dr. Joshua Nkomo to then Prime Minister Robert Mugabe on June 7, 1983, exemplifies the enmity that existed between these two grand political personalities:

“It is obvious to me why you decided to form the 5th Brigade...so that you may use it as a party and tribal brigade for eliminating and liquidating, as you have many time said, those you choose to destroy. As a matter of fact, when I questioned the formation of the 5th Brigade outside the ZNA without consultation you angrily replied: ‘Who are you to be consulted? This brigade,’ you said, ‘has been formed to crush those who try to subvert my government. And if you attempt that they will crush you too.’”⁸²⁶

Other respondents nested this competitive violence narrative in both the interpersonal conflict between Nkomo and Mugabe, but more importantly in how it played itself out in the rivalry and antagonism between the political parties they represented (ZAPU and ZANU respectively):

“But it was really the person of Joshua Nkomo, it was the organisation, the formation of ZAPU which he couldn’t stand, because ZAPU claimed a slice of the cake, *because ZAPU claimed a role in the Liberation Struggle...And Robert Mugabe has never reconciled himself to that.* And what better than to wipe them off the face of the earth, not because they are Ndebele, but because they are ZAPU. Not because, you know, they worked with the Russians, no, but because they are being led by Joshua Nkomo. Joshua Nkomo has consistently been a threat to Robert Mugabe. Robert Mugabe always felt inferior. He has consistently had an inferiority complex vis-à-vis Joshua Nkomo, who loomed large. While he was alive, Joshua Nkomo could conduct a political rally anywhere in the country. No other leader other than Robert Mugabe could do that. Today Robert Mugabe can only hold rallies in the rural areas and in the most urban areas, by *forcing* people to the rallies. And so I would go for the fact that they really wanted to create a situation where people would in fact say ZAPU never existed...The first person to call it ‘Zimbabwe’ was actually Joshua Nkomo, when he created ZAPU. That infuriates Mugabe [to] no end. *So, wipe them out, get rid of them [and] make them completely irrelevant to the Liberation Struggle;* failing to actually realise that you don’t kill off people in order to affect that, you really make them icons of the history of your country... And that’s exactly what happened. And Robert Mugabe to this day struggles with having to do a balancing act between ZANU-PF in the original, and PF-ZAPU in the original.”⁸²⁷

Thus, beyond the personal competition between Nkomo and Mugabe as political leaders; their particular giftedness, charisma, recognition and political clout inside and

⁸²⁶ ‘Nkomo speaks from the grave’ (2005) *The Zimbabwean*, Vol. 1 No 37, 21-27 October.

⁸²⁷ Interview: JM1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 26/02/08 – (Shona Professor of Political Science in Zimbabwe).

outside of Zimbabwe, this competitive violence was cased in the question of who had *ownership* over the liberation struggle of Zimbabwe. This was a structural battle over recognition in the political realm. The ZANU-PF wanted to see themselves as the only authentic revolutionaries, the rightful heirs to rule Zimbabwe alone. The ZANU-PF was unable to accept that this honour would have to be shared with ZAPU who laid claim to the exact same political-revolutionary inheritance. Judging from the transcripts that emerged in this study neither the ZANU, or the ZAPU were the rightful heirs to Zimbabwe. Yes, ZANU-PF may have won the vote of the people, but the country of Zimbabwe was to be the possession of the people who lived inside its borders. The revolutionary impulse of the Matabeleland masses was to own the land; the very nation itself, and in so doing they offered their inheritance to the political care-takers who were dutifully elected. The ZANU-PF leadership, who were endowed with a solemn responsibility to steward not hoard the whole nation, failed the people of Matabeleland in this regard.

Other narratives suggest that the severe extremities of violence in Matabeleland resulted from the disparate armed security branches of the ZANU-PF being locked in direct competition with one another in order to prove their violent prowess and in a desperate attempt to win the approval of the newly elected ZANU-PF government. Lt. Col. Munemo, former commander of the Fifth Brigade spells it out in plain terms:

“You know, any security forces when they are operating, there is going to be competition. Particularly in highly politicised atmosphere that we deployed into the period we were in Matabeleland. It appears to me by then there was very strong spirits of competition amongst the various sections of the security forces. Between the task Force, the battalions, the intelligence people (CIO), The ZNA. Everybody wanted to deliver the final solution to the prime minister. I am not absolving the Fifth Brigade, but this is what suspicions I have. In this contest to deliver the final solution, I think the other [army] people felt marginalised by the Fifth Brigade and must have done more harm to get good results. That is my perception.”⁸²⁸

The preceding script confirms the interrelationship between violence and competition. However, it also inhabits the space of a number of critical assumptions that need certain deconstruction.

⁸²⁸ Yap, 2001: 229.

Firstly, it assumes that all the security branches desired to compete over the ‘delivery’ of the final solution (that this was even a legitimate goal to start with). Secondly, it assumes that all the security branches were willing to commit gross human rights violations in order to accomplish this goal (the concept of ‘final solution’ insinuates this). Thirdly, it assumes that the other security branches were jealous of the Fifth Brigade and therefore outdid themselves in their application of violence as compared to the Fifth Brigade (this displays the arrogance of the Fifth Brigade as a special army unit of Mugabe). Fourthly, it assumes an outcome of reward (‘good results’) from the violence system when armies overstep the known and acceptable boundaries of restraint (the violence worldview has always promoted the idea that the end justifies the means).

This line of reasoning is not only flawed, it skirts around the core of the issue: was the Matabeleland violence justified? This text trivialises the Matabeleland violence by the cavalier manner in which it references the competition; as if speaking about a sporting match or a friendly test-game on the field. It lessens the epic proportions of the stand-off between the two leaders and their structures as legitimate revolutionary rivalries (ZANU and ZAPU), and it deflects from the Fifth Brigade and its role in the wholesale instigation of human rights abuses and violent terror throughout the Matabeleland region.

7.5.5. Violence and Motivation

The violence system consistently distorts and covers the true *motivations* of the antagonists involved. The revolutionary violence of the ZANU-PF was often defended because it was employed in the service of a morally just cause (the freedom and independence of Zimbabwe). However, herein lies the paradox; within every act of justified violence perpetrated by the ZANU-PF there seemed to reside another contrary ‘script’ of injustice that repelled every claim of moral superiority on the part of the oppressor. Hence, with each effort by the ZANU-PF ruling party to forcibly legitimise itself through violence the opposite occurred; it lost legitimacy in the eyes of the Matabeleland civilian population. There are multiple illustrations of *unintended consequences* which resulted in a backlash of dilemmas for the ZANU-PF and the navigation of its violence system.

Although the actual aim was to ‘wipe-out’ the political base of the opposition party ZAPU (see Chapter 6, Section 6.6.2.), probably one of the Fifth Brigade’s most

‘successful’ accomplishments was to solidify tribalism and ethnic conflict (see Chapter 4). The perceptions around the hardening of ethnic prejudice were based on the Fifth Brigade’s use of indiscriminate violence, almost exclusive use of the Shona language, and frequent recourse to tribal justifications as an explanation for the violence. The strong identification between ethnicity and political affiliation came as a result of the overt targeting of ZAPU leadership (which was mostly Ndebele) in the operations of the Fifth Brigade.

“The Brigade’s operations were crucial in amplifying both a political and an ethnic interpretation of violence: the almost entirely Shona-speaking Fifth Brigade regularly used an overtly tribal and political discourse, and its all-encompassing violence could not be explained as militarily motivated.”⁸²⁹

Research on the meaning assigned to the Fifth Brigade violence by the civilian population of Matabeleland, bears out this ethnic interpretation. For example, the rapes committed on the civilian population by the ex-ZIPRA dissidents or other members of the security forces such as the Zimbabwean National Army (ZNA) were often described as primarily abuse of power. However, rapes committed by the Fifth Brigade were perceived as a systematic attempt to create a generation of Shona children.⁸³⁰

Likewise, the act of building schools by the Fifth Brigade was not seen as welcomed development, but instead as another way to introduce Shona-speaking students and teachers into the Matabeleland region. For many this display of supposed humanitarian concern by the Fifth Brigade was little more than a damage control exercise embarked on by the ZANU-PF in order to save-face in the midst of its waning legitimacy. In a state-run media publicity stunt, *The Chronicle* (Bulawayo) newspaper attempted a valiant composition to lift the failing image of the Fifth Brigade by magnifying their assistance in the construction of schools in Matabeleland:

“Thanks to the Fifth Brigade of the Zimbabwe National Army which stepped in to help alleviate the problem [hindered construction of schools]. In addition to their normal function of hunting down dissidents, their trucks are also being used to ferry sand, water, bricks and other building materials to construction sites...He [Cpt. Claudius Makowa] said it has always been the policy of the army to engage in productive projects... ‘It is the school committees which approach us whenever they want help and we are always willing to give such free help,’ he said. ‘A busy

⁸²⁹ Alexander, et al, 2000: 218.

⁸³⁰ Ibid: 223-4.

soldier is a happy soldier,’ said Brigadier Major Mike Sango who is the commander of the Fifth Brigade unit in the district. He expressed satisfaction at the progress the soldiers were making in helping to build the school.”⁸³¹

Apparently, the Matabeleland public reading this newspaper were not to be convinced. For the ordinary Matabele on the ground, this hailing of the noble deeds of the Fifth Brigade soldiers as ‘good Samaritans’ (to use Biblical metaphor) was nothing more than another pretentious, deceptive campaign by the ZANU-PF to try and bolster its legitimacy which had collapsed in tatters after the wave of violent onslaught that had been unfurled on Matabeleland by the state-sponsored Fifth Brigade.

7.5.6. The Production and Performance of Violence Narratives

*“What follows is an attempt to put this sequence of events in the perspective of...how violence generates mythmaking, which itself becomes a constitutive element of further violence.”*⁸³²

The ZANU-PF was always careful to produce and publicly pronounce a validating narrative of violence *before* they would execute acts of systematic violence. This section of the study promulgates a direct correlation between violent *discourses* as precursors to violent *actions*. Put differently, violence narratives manufacture the social reality in which acts of performative violence are then realised. The Matabeleland violence which sprawled over seven years of time abounds in examples of official scripts of violence being exploited as a means to construct the necessary platforms for violence to then be performed in the public domain.

For instance, in November of 1981, violent clashes between ex-ZANLA and ex-ZIPRA soldiers broke out in the demobilisation camps located in the densely populated Entumbane Township in Bulawayo (See Chapter 5, Section 5.4.1.). These skirmishes have frequently been attributed to a number of trigger sources such as the restlessness of the ex-soldiers awaiting a slow process of demobilisation, excitable civilian mobs that were easily susceptible to politicisation, and conflicts springing out of the drunken revelry of soldiers and community members. While all these source citations are documented, many Matabele will quickly add the significance of the words uttered at a

⁸³¹ ‘Soldiers to the rescue’, (1984) *The Chronicle (Bulawayo)* 12 August.

⁸³² Lemarchand, R. 1994. *Burundi – Ethnic Conflict and Genocide*. Cambridge: Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Cambridge University Press, xi (preface).

ZANU-PF political rally just a few hours before the severe violence broke-out between these two factions. More specifically, many refer to the barrage of fiery, inciting verbiage promulgated by government minister, Enos Nkala while addressing a crowd of ZANU-PF supporters in White Stadium in Bulawayo:

“As from today Zapu has become the enemy of Zanu-PF...The time has come for Zanu-PF to flex its muscles. Our supporters must now form vigilante committees for those who want to challenge us. There must be a general mobilisation of our supporters. Organise yourselves into small groups in readiness to challenge Zapu on its home ground. If it means a few blows, we shall deliver them.”⁸³³

This rallying ‘war cry’ discourse and the ensuing violence that erupted in the streets of Bulawayo soon after provide an element of correlation value to the ‘violence narrative’ leads to ‘violent action’ presupposition being put forward in this section.

In a similar vein, starting in 1982, the year the arms caches were uncovered on ZAPU-owned farms (Chapter 5, Section: 5.4.2.), the violence rhetoric against Joshua Nkomo and the ZAPU became increasingly virulent and thereafter Nkomo’s life was put under threat and the ZANU-PF deployed the Fifth Brigade effectively escalating state-sanctioned violence exponentially in Matabeleland. After the ‘discovery’ of arms caches, Mugabe publicly threatened the life of Nkomo in his usual vitriolic and metaphorical manner, “He [Mugabe] likened Nkomo’s role in the Cabinet to having ‘a cobra in the house’ and went on: ‘The only way to deal effectively with a snake is to strike and destroy its head.’”⁸³⁴ Thereafter:

“...on 17 February [1982] he [Mugabe] sacked Nkomo and most other Zapu members from his cabinet. On 11 March, Dumiso Dabengwa and Lieutenant General Lookout Masuku, Isaac Nyathi and others were arrested [and] eventually charged with treason.”⁸³⁵

After this, in December of 1982 the Fifth Brigade had its ‘passing out’ parade and on the 26th of January 1983 it was deployed in Matabeleland North. According to certain sources, “Reports of atrocities began within days”⁸³⁶. The first documented cases of

⁸³³ Meredith, 2008: 61.

⁸³⁴ Ibid: 63.

⁸³⁵ Todd, 2007: 43.

⁸³⁶ CCJP/LRF. 1997. *Breaking the Silence, Building True Peace – A Report on the Disturbances in Matabeleland and the Midlands, 1980-1988*. Harare: CCJPZ and LRF, xv.

atrocities were gathered and presented to the ZANU-PF government already in February of 1983. Then in March of 1983, Nkomo was placed under house arrest:

“Nkomo was well aware that his life was in grave danger after the verbal threats of violence from Prime Minister Mugabe...Shortly after eight that night [Sunday, 6 March 1983], Nkomo received a message that his driver and two others had been shot dead in cold blood at his house. The killers then rampaged through his home, destroying all they could, smashing the windscreens of three cars with their rifle butts and slashing the upholstery. Nkomo’s wife MaFuyana was with him and implored him to flee Zimbabwe. He had done so on Sunday night.”⁸³⁷

As a result of Nkomo’s successful escape, Bulawayo was cordoned off by the Fifth Brigade for four days and 1,000 ‘suspects’ (supposed ZAPU/ ex-ZIPRA dissidents) were arrested over that time.⁸³⁸ On 19 April 1983, in his official speech commemorating Independence Day, Mugabe had these sobering words to say to a rally gathered in Bulawayo, “Obviously it can never be policy to mete out blanket punishment to innocent persons, but in areas where banditry and dissident activities are rampant and civilian sympathy is a common feature, it may not be possible to distinguish innocent from guilty.”⁸³⁹ By the end of 1983, one year after the deployment of the Fifth Brigade, there were a total recorded number of 2,610 violent acts (including murder, disappearance, property damage, torture, detention, assault and rape) perpetrated by known branches of the armed security forces of the ZANU-PF. In contrast, recorded violent incidents ascribed to armed civilians, dissidents and unknown entities totalled at only 91 for that same period.⁸⁴⁰

Again in 1984, state-sanctioned violence significantly increased in Matabeleland South and once more the ZANU-PF Ministry of Information spokesperson insisted that this was as a result of heightened dissident activity and the recent killings of white farmers in the area. In that same year, while addressing the funeral of a murdered ZANU-PF official on the 18th of May 1984, Mugabe indirectly summarised government policy as follows:

⁸³⁷ Todd, 2007: 57

⁸³⁸ CCJP/LRF, *Breaking the Silence*, 1997: xv.

⁸³⁹ ‘Mugabe threatens to Ban Zapu over Dissidents’, (1983) *The Herald (Harare)* 19 April.

⁸⁴⁰ CCJP/LRF, *Breaking the Silence*, 1997:162.

“We are going to see this through to the bitter end. I shall give power to the police, security forces, all of them, to mount a manhunt not only in houses, but also in bushes, anthills, and trees.”⁸⁴¹

The monumental outcomes of this government policy of violence in 1984 are explicitly described in the bleak, almost disparaging language of the following text:

“Although no more than 200 dissidents were active in the area, the government deployed some 15,000 troops and police, including 5 Brigade, and imposed harsh curfew measures on the civilian population. The area was already suffering from a third year of drought...In a move that was bound to lead to widespread starvation, the government closed all stores; halted all food deliveries to the area, including drought relief...Hundreds of thousands of ordinary civilians were quickly reduced to a desperate state...An officer in 5 Brigade, explaining the army’s food policy at a meeting with local Ndebele, said, ‘First you will eat your chickens, then your goats, then your cattle, then your donkeys. Then you will eat your children and finally you will eat the dissidents.’”⁸⁴²

The total number of violent acts committed by state security branches rose from 2,610 in 1983 to 3,014 in 1984. As in the previous year, the violence assigned to non-state actors (including the dissidents) was exponentially less, only totalling 43 incidents in the same year (1984).

Violence spiked again around the time of national elections in July of 1985, as could be expected in the highly politicised environment of Matabeleland. The militarised youth wing of the ZANU-PF was particularly active in exerting violence over this time: “ZANU-PF Youth rampages continue[d] before and after the July elections, resulting in 2000 being left homeless and scores dead in Matabeleland, the Midlands and Harare.”⁸⁴³

Other sources depicted this youth violence as such:

“As the 1985 election approached, Matabeleland was subjected to further violence. Zanu-PF Youth Brigades, modelled on China’s Red Guards, were unleashed onto the local population, coercing them into buying party cards, forcing thousands onto buses to attend party rallies, and beating anyone who stood in the way.”⁸⁴⁴

Describing Mugabe’s inciting rhetoric just before the 1985 elections Judith Garfield Todd exposes the connection between violent narratives and direct violent action:

⁸⁴¹ Spring, 1986:183.

⁸⁴² Meredith, 2008: 69-70.

⁸⁴³ CCJP/LRF, *Breaking the Silence*, 1997: xvi.

⁸⁴⁴ Meredith, 2008: 71.

“[Mugabe]...warned people prior to the 1985 elections that a vote for Nkomo’s party would be interpreted as a vote for dissidents. Many remembered, I wrote, how he urged his people to remove the stumps and how Zanu youth and women then took to the high-density areas in Harare and elsewhere, looting, attacking and killing some Zapu supporters and destroying their properties.”⁸⁴⁵

Interestingly, in a subtle form of protest, dissident violence also increased immediately *after* the 1985 elections. There are at least two explanations for this: Firstly, the 1985 elections may have been a source of renewed sense of confidence for the dissidents when ZAPU was once again voted in as the main opposition (15 seats in Parliament) with a sweeping majority across the Matabeleland region, so they stepped up their activity. Secondly, the 1985 elections may have been a source of dissident anger at the wave of ZANU-PF election repression that surrounded the election period coupled with the harsh response of the ruling party to the final election results. Overestimating its legitimacy in Matabeleland, the ZANU-PF expected to gain over the ZAPU in the polls of 1985. When ZAPU took the region in a landslide victory, ZANU-PF responded with a fury of indignation at this snub by the opposition. For example, as a way of disciplining Matabeleland, ZANU-PF forced Enos Nkala on a constituency that did not vote for him and appointed him Minister of Home Affairs, a very sensitive position of power mandated to deal with all security issues including the dissident problem. Nkala, an arrogant firebrand of a politician and a master at narrative manipulation, not only increased the military repression against the dissidents and the Ndebele civilian populace, but used this position to ban all political activity of ZAPU (June 1987) and eventually commanded a raid that completely shut-down the ZAPU party offices (September 1987).

Statistically, during the three years that the Fifth Brigade was deployed in Matabeleland (1983-1985), the violence was without a doubt the most severe. The total incidents of violence documented for the period of 1982 to 1987 is 7,246. Out of this total 6,831 incidents occurred between the years of 1983-1985. Of these 6,831 incidents, 5,743 were perpetrated by the Fifth Brigade.⁸⁴⁶ Thus, these numerical statistics suggest that the

⁸⁴⁵ Todd, J. 2007: 405-6.

⁸⁴⁶ CCJP/LRF, *Breaking the Silence*, 1997: 161-162. The total figure of 7, 246 incidents of violence cited here are based on the actual documented victim statements that were collected. However, many researchers and activists alike would agree that the actual numbers are likely much higher.

Fifth Brigade was responsible for the majority of the violence experienced in Matabeleland.

This study extends the discussion of the ‘who, how and what’ of violence to inquire into the ‘why’ of violence as it relates to the social constructivist nature of narrative. This research maintains that with the coming of the Fifth Brigade, the ZANU-PF engaged in a psycho-social narrative of violence that was profoundly powerful and damaging to the psyche of the people of Matabeleland and was instrumental in the enactment of the actual violence itself. In this way, the violence discourse that functioned as a forerunner to and as an accompanying text of the Fifth Brigade’s deployment in Matabeleland *only* served to further compound the physical scars of violation left in the Brigade’s wake. Hence, *narrative is understood to shape violence*.

However, the converse is also true; *violence can shape narrative*. Thus, the ‘narrative before violence, or violence before narrative’ dilemma is not an ‘either/or’ proposition, but a ‘both/and’ scenario. The violence between the oppressor and the oppressed is like a *conversational dance*; a lethal dialogue of brinkmanship. Each ensuing act of violence and counter-violence builds up into a crescendo of chaotic contestation over identity, space, time and power. Violence as ‘social practice’ becomes the conduit through which the script is written, explored and publicly expressed. In turn, that script becomes the channel through which respondent violence is then acted upon again. And the cycle continues.

7.6. Conclusion: Sourcing Legitimacy

This chapter has explored patterns of legitimacy; how and where it is sourced. More specifically, the ZANU-PF government’s attempt to obtain political legitimacy to rule Zimbabwe was the interest at hand. For the ZANU-PF, the fatal flaw in its unrelenting search for legitimacy merged at the nexus of where legitimacy and violence intersected. In the inception of ZANU-PF’s rule, political legitimacy was claimed on the basis of popular vote and attached to the *liberation credentials* of individual leaders and the armed movements from which they emerged. As time progressed, the ZANU-PF began to feel the need to further entrench its legitimacy through a concerted and strategic effort aimed at the *militarisation of the state*. This policy move was consistent with the articulated goal of the establishment of a one-party state endorsed by the ZANU-PF

government, but eventually abandoned in 1990 under public political pressure (see Chapter 5, Section 5.3.2.).

Capitalising on the patriotic display of a powerful militarised state, the ZANU-PF embarked on a covert campaign of violent control that accentuated its *disciplinary function* across numerous political structures and social sectors within the Matabeleland region. These repressive surveillance measures included historical indoctrination in schools, political manipulation, media restrictions, dominating government, business and civic leadership positions, and the constriction of development through bureaucratic ineptitude, indecision and the blockage of funding resource flows. In the final section of this chapter, the constitutive elements that secured the ZANU-PF's *violence system* were unraveled. Of interest here was the establishment of the linkages between violence and its re-creative tendencies, violence and the sacred, violence and hierarchy, violence and competition, violence and motivation, and finally violence and its production and subsequent performance.

Although political legitimacy can be negotiated through social contracting and even legislated on behalf of the collective good or the nation as a whole, in general terms, legitimacy within the human relational web is most authentic when it has been earned through honest interaction. Whether in the personal or public political domain, legitimacy loses its very essence when it is forced upon interactional networks. By attempting to forcibly impose their legitimacy on the Matabeleland region, the ZANU-PF evoked a prevailing *public pretence* on the relational protocol in the political domain. In this equation, the Matabeleland people were required to play the role of contented, obedient *subject* and the ZANU-PF government to play the role of ordained, authoritative *leader*. While this commanding posture of capitulation and subservience on the part of Matabeleland was well-suited for the ZANU-PF's political ambitions of attaining absolute power, for the masses it was saturated with insincerity and mocking parody. In his excellent work on the 'public transcripts' between the dominant and the subjugated members of society, James C. Scott expounds on this pretentious interactive communication below:

“With rare, but significant, exceptions the public performance of the subordinate will, out of prudence, fear, and the desire to curry favor, be shaped to appeal to the expectations of the powerful...The public transcript, where it is not positively

misleading, is unlikely to tell the whole story about power relations. It is frequently in the interest of both parties to tacitly conspire in misrepresentation...The theatrical imperatives that normally prevail in situations of domination produce a public transcript in close conformity with how the dominant group would wish to have things appear. The dominant never control the stage absolutely, but their wishes normally prevail...In ideological terms the public transcript will typically, by its accommodationist tone, provide convincing evidence for the hegemony of dominant values, for the hegemony of dominant discourse.”⁸⁴⁷

Harsh discipline of the subjugated may result in compliance, but only on the basis of fear. ZANU-PF assumed its legitimacy derived from the fear that it so ably instilled in the people of Matabeleland through its crusades of violence and terror. *However, fear can never form the source of genuine political legitimacy.* Hence, to the ZANU-PF, as they surveyed the political landscape of Matabeleland, it appeared to be quiet, submitted and acquiescing in its demands for political recognition and autonomy, however barely under the surface a marked oppositional posture took firm root. This root system of resistance while seemingly hidden underground provided the consistent nourishment required for multiple counter-narratives to not only survive, but also to thrive as living monuments of protest silently railing against the legitimacy of the ZANU-PF in the minds of the young and old alike in Matabeleland. With clarity, Scott gives descriptive thickness to the dynamics of this veiled protest:

“...The greater the disparity in power between dominant and subordinate and the more arbitrarily it is exercised, the more the public transcript of subordinates will take on a stereotyped, ritualistic cast. In other words, the more menacing the power, the thicker the mask.”⁸⁴⁸

The metaphoric use of the word *mask* is illuminating here. The mask has two pivotal functions: to disguise and/or hide the face, while at the same time to present to the public a particular image that is acceptable; conforming to the status quo. In Matabeleland, this analogy played itself out through the mask of *violence* worn by the ZANU-PF and the mask of *silence* worn by the Matabele citizenry. The mask of violence displayed by the ZANU-PF provided covering for their unequivocal lust for perpetual political power while at the same time projecting itself as a form of legitimacy. The mask of silence

⁸⁴⁷ Scott, J. 1990. *Domination and the Arts of Resistance – Hidden Scripts*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2 & 4.

⁸⁴⁸ Ibid: 3.

donned by the Matabeleland masses hid their prolific scripts of protest against the ZANU-PF while at the same time projecting a false submission to their claim to legitimacy. These masks were motivated by fear of *rejection* on the part of the ZANU-PF and fear of *annihilation* on the part of the Matabeleland populace. These masks will not be removed unless the symbiotic, cyclical connection between violence and the production of fear is broken. Only then will legitimacy emerge as a tangible reality in the socio-political discourse of national co-existence in Matabeleland. Bona fide legitimacy knows no masks.

Chapter 8: Unity – Narratives of Uniformity and Diversity

8.1. Introduction: The 1987 Unity Accord – An Exhausted Unification

“Claims for recognition of the wholly unacknowledged post-independence violence posed a different challenge to nationalist narrative: they threatened the new myth of UNITY to which both the former Zapu leaders [who joined government circles after the 1987 Peace Accords] and ZanuPF now subscribed”⁸⁴⁹

By the beginning of 1987, Matabeleland was *exhausted* from violence. The civilian masses were terrorised, living in a perpetual state of fear and grief, the ZAPU opposition was imprisoned, harassed or in hiding, and the ZANU-PF armed forces were losing patience trying to ‘crush’ a small dissident movement that seemingly would not die. It appeared as if the season for peace had finally arrived. After a great deal of behind the scenes manoeuvring and shuttle diplomacy conducted by then President Canaan Banana and other influential persons (including civil society and religious leaders), ZANU-PF and ZAPU entered into unity talks in February of 1987. By April of that same year, the unity talks were abandoned only to be resumed again in October and brought to the climax of a signing ceremony between Robert Mugabe and Joshua Nkomo on 27 December 1987 officially identified as the Unity Accord.⁸⁵⁰ The talks were abandoned in April under the ZANU-PF accusation of increased dissident violence. However, it would be prudent to note that over the same period of time as the unity talks were suspended, the ZANU-PF exercised its unilateral power through executive fiat, banning all ZAPU political activity and later ransacking and shutting down the ZAPU offices in an official raid.

Multiple political theories of conflict management and peacemaking (ranging from highly favourable to highly sceptical) exist to try to explain the coalescing that occurred around the Zimbabwe Unity Accord. One of these conceptions, the ‘ripeness theory’ of conflict resolution⁸⁵¹ anchors itself on the idea that a conflict must escalate to a

⁸⁴⁹ Alexander, J., McGregor, J., & Ranger, T. 2000. *Violence & Memory – One Hundred Years in the ‘Dark Forests’ of Matabeleland*. Oxford: James Curry, 254.

⁸⁵⁰ CCJP/LRF. 1997. *Breaking the Silence, Building True Peace – A Report on the Disturbances in Matabeleland and the Midlands 1980-1988*. Harare: CCJPZ and LRF, 73.

⁸⁵¹ Zartman, I. 1985. *Ripe for resolution: conflict and intervention in Africa*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. See also Stedman, S, Rothchild, D, Cousens, E. (eds.) 1991. *Ending civil Wars: The Implementation of Peace Agreements*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers; Haass, R. and O’Sullivan, M. (eds.) *Honey and Vinegar: incentive, sanctions and foreign policy*. Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press.

critical level of maturity before it can be truly resolved. This theory maintains that violent impasse cannot be resolved until the disadvantages outweigh the advantages of continuing the conflict on the part of all parties involved. If the benefits of the conflict are still more enticing than a future-view of peace, the conflict will be prolonged. The cessation of violence must appear to be the most attractive option for resolution, before conflicting parties can be successfully guided to the negotiation table for peace talks and the nation can embark on a profitable reconstruction programme.

Therefore, in this stream of thought, conflict interventions that are applied too early in this cycle of 'ripeness' will necessarily fail no matter how skilfully facilitated. Put differently, unless all the parties to a dispute desire peace, it will remain unattainable. The notion of 'ripeness' in conflict resolution processes could be useful in explaining the Zimbabwe Unity Accords. After all, the ZANU-PF patience had been spent trying to wipe-out the dissidents and the oppositional strongholds of ZAPU in Matabeleland to no avail, and the pressure from internal and external sources was beginning to take its toll. However, this research would venture to discount the 'ripeness' theory in the Zimbabwe case of the Unity Accord in that while it may have appeared as if the ZANU-PF was responding to a sense of battle fatigue, in reality they had ulterior motives. Realising that their aim of subduing the Matabeleland populace through fear and terror had temporarily succeeded and that by all accounts they remained the dominant force in this conflict equation, the ZANU-PF had little to lose in *power* and much to gain in *reputation* as they entered into the unity talks.

ZAPU, on the other hand, feeling exceptionally demoralised and politically cornered in a trajectory of certain defeat, capitulated. By that point, ZAPU as the political representation of the Matabeleland region had suffered heavy losses, not only in civilian deaths, but in seven years of underdevelopment. Aware that ZANU-PF was not about to renege on its threats of ongoing violence and that in the political climate of the ZANU-PF cosmology there was no room for rigorous opposition, ZAPU as the junior party to the conflict surrendered. The few ex-ZIPRA 'dissidents' remaining quickly fell in line behind ZAPU in a classic move of allegiance and deference to their former (albeit estranged) political leaders. In this scenario, the ZAPU had much to lose giving up a long history of political power and influence, and little to gain except for the stoppage of blood-letting

which by that time had already extracted a gigantic traumatic price from the people of Matabeleland. Thus, as the ZANU-PF stepped into the unity negotiations with their own mapped-out, yet hidden political agenda, the ZAPU crossed the threshold of unity talks in sheer exhaustion and tired defeat. In other words, the ‘ripeness’ theory of conflict resolution applied to ZAPU, who came to the negotiation tables weakened and beleaguered, but it did not apply to ZANU-PF who may have exhausted their violence options, yet still had other alternatives and resources at their disposal.

This research argues that the Zimbabwe Unity Accord, far from being a highly transformative invention, was the *expedient alternative* to an exhausted violence. For the ZANU-PF the ‘exhaustion’ was sourced in a relentless military campaign that had run its course and for the ZAPU the exhaustion originated from the extreme suffering of untold thousands who were lost in a seemingly endless flow of bloodshed over a seven year period. Thus, this study suggests that it was these forms of violence *exhaustion*, as uneven as they were between ZANU-PF and ZAPU that motivated and propelled the Unity Accord design, as opposed to it being the outcome of a genuine interest in power-sharing between two rival political parties. This chapter further explores this line of thinking as it relates to the dynamics surrounding the Zimbabwe Unity Accord of 1987 and its myriad representations to the various actor-agents involved in this supposed ‘dramatic finale’ to the Matabeleland violence of the early 1980s.

8.2. Unity Accord: A Triumphant Diplomacy

The ZANU-PF meta-narrative touted the Unity Accord as a skilled piece of *diplomacy* which ushered in a highly sought after peaceful resolution to a protracted civil war. For the ZANU-PF, the Unity Accord was a strong symbol of their benevolence and willingness to engage in a power-sharing arrangement that would bring about a political agreement for the sake of the unity of the nation. Throughout the process, ZANU-PF continued to exonerate itself as the only legitimate power and to emphasise that any state-sanctioned excesses in violence that occurred between the years of 1980-1987 were by and large defensive and protective in nature. The ZANU-PF presented itself in a controversial and condescending role posturing as the father or the older brother (to use a familial analogy) choosing to look beyond the faults of its reckless, rebellious, younger sibling (ZAPU) and thereby receiving its son/brother back home with a paternalistic

warning, but welcoming arms nonetheless. Speaking after the initial collapse of the Unity talks, and the supposed discovery of a link between ZAPU and the dissidents, Mugabe had these patronising words of exhortation:

“Other governments would have banned ZAPU a ‘long time ago’, said Cde Mugabe but because some of the party’s leaders were involved in the liberation struggle he felt that they should be given a chance and they could correct the situation. He said the Government wanted ZAPU to operate legally and as openly as possible and not use its offices to further dissident activities. ‘They shouldn’t try to get through dissident activity what they have lost through the ballot,’ said Cde Mugabe.”⁸⁵²

In full diplomatic flare, Prime Minister Mugabe described the culmination of the Unity Accords as follows:

“After eight years of experience we have examined the position in the country: the interests of our people, the interests of our parties and the interest of the leadership and we have come to no other conclusion than that unity would enhance our freedom and independence... We hope that those who yesterday felt they had cause to wage a political fight because we were divided, can now take note and cognisance of our unity and lay down their arms, come and join the rest of the people and work constructively for the nation.”⁸⁵³

In between the lines of this official text above, other veiled scripts were being heard loud and clear by the opposition. Firstly, Mugabe speaks in the plural of ‘we have examined the position of the country’, but many critics would question whether or not this was a joint examination or that of the ZANU-PF alone. For many commentators analysing the political climate at that time, it was well understood that the ZAPU party came to the process relegated to a subjugated position of defeat, the less powerful party at the table. Secondly, Mugabe delineates a three-prong set of ‘interests’ – those of the people, the parties and the leadership - which were taken into consideration. For the Matabeleland populace this was *politic-speak*, knowing full well that the offices (and de facto operations) of their political party had been completely closed down and their true interests of maintaining a strong opposition voice and sharing power in government were completely crushed under the heavy hand of the Fifth Brigade and the Gukurahundi violence. Thirdly, as a backdrop to Mugabe’s talk of ‘enhancing freedom’ was a self-

⁸⁵² ‘ZAPU has links with dissidents – PM’ (1987) *The Chronicle (Bulawayo)* 1 October.

⁸⁵³ ‘Speeches made at the Signing of the Unity Agreement at State House, Harare, 22/12/1987’, (1988) *Sapem (Harare)* February, No. 5, 25-27.

proclaimed interest in establishing a one-party state which surfaced in the public domain only two years later in 1990. Fourthly, Mugabe invites ZAPU (and by reference the ‘dissidents’) to ‘join the rest of the people’ (including the ZANU-PF one must assume) in building the nation. This insinuates that the party that must make the first move toward unity is the ZAPU; they must assimilate into ZANU-PF as opposed to any mention of a collaborative effort moving ‘hand-in-hand’ in partnership toward unity. In sum, the ZANU-PF meta-narrative projected itself as the political *benefactor* and the former ZAPU as the *beneficiary* of the Unity Accord and in so doing the Unity Accord itself was cased as a generous political gesture of the victor graciously opening the storehouse doors so that the vanquished could share in the spoils.

8.2.1. A Necessary Political or Military Solution?

In the politics of war, the memory speaks louder than the words. The previous seven years of *non-negotiable, state-supported* violence could not be erased from the minds and hearts of the people of Matabeleland, despite the verbal accolades given to the Unity Accord denoting it as a prime example of political diplomacy through negotiations. By the actions of the ZANU-PF, one would have to surmise that the ‘dissident / opposition’ problem was *only* to be dealt with through a *military* operation, not a genuine *political* (non-violent) solution. In fact, in 1986 Mugabe publicly declared his intentions:

“The solution in Matabeleland is a military one. Their [the dissidents] grievances are unfounded. The verdict of the voters was cast in 1980. They should have accepted defeat then...The situation in Matabeleland is one that requires change. The people must be reoriented.”⁸⁵⁴

In the eyes of ZAPU and its Matabeleland constituencies, the Unity Accord amounted to a convenient intervention on the part of ZANU-PF after their military operation was finalised. Therefore, for the majority of Matabeleland, the Unity Accord was a farce; a political union manipulated with the instrumentation of violence. Professor G. Feltoe of the Faculty of Law at the University of Zimbabwe summarised this predicament in a straight forward manner: “*Zanu ruthlessly got its way. It finally caused*

⁸⁵⁴ Spring, W. 1986. *The Long Fields: Zimbabwe Since Independence*. Basingstoke, Hants, UK: Pickering and Ingles, 178.

Zapu to capitulate and come in as junior partners, and have a political unity arrangement as the result of intimidation and terror."⁸⁵⁵

8.2.2. Blanket Amnesty: Necessary Compromise or Short-cut to Unity?

In April 1988, in accordance with the Unity Accord protocol, ZANU-PF granted amnesty to all dissidents still at large. For many in Matabeleland this was a welcome move and the most tangible benefit to be derived from the Unity Accord:

"The Unity Accord by itself was nothing more than a piece of paper. The people of the region [Matabeleland] wanted to see something more concrete and this gesture of goodwill [dissident amnesty] has probably done more to convince them than any amount of political sloganeering or unity rallies."⁸⁵⁶

"Some benefits were beginning to accrue from the unity accord. On Zimbabwe's eighth birthday, 18 April 1988, President Mugabe declared an amnesty for all dissidents and Joshua Nkomo urged them to lay down their arms and come in from the bush. In a Government Gazette published on 3 May, clemency and full pardon was extended to all dissidents who surrendered their arms and reported to the police between 19 April and 31 May...By the official deadline of midnight on Tuesday 31 May 112 men had handed themselves over to the authorities."⁸⁵⁷

However, the ZANU-PF then declared blanket amnesty for all its military personnel for any atrocities committed during the time period of Gukurahundi, much to the dismay of the multitude of victims and survivors of violence in Matabeleland.

"In June 1988 the Amnesty was extended to include all members of the Security Forces who had committed human rights violations: all army personnel who were serving sentences for crimes committed in the 1980s were released from jails. The 1980s disturbances were finally at an end, leaving in their wake both relief and, in some parts of the country, a legacy of health and practical problems, material impoverishment and a mistrust of the authorities."⁸⁵⁸

While this unilateral declaration of a blanket amnesty for all security forces was not surprising, or unexpected within the general bounds of political peace agreements, it did nonetheless excuse a voluminous number of gross human rights violations committed by the State against its own citizenry, and it effectively silenced any confessions or

⁸⁵⁵ Yap, K. 2001. *Uprooting the Weeds – Power, Ethnicity and Violence in the Matabeleland Conflict 1980-1987*. Stockholm: Elanders Novum, 275.

⁸⁵⁶ Ibid: 274.

⁸⁵⁷ Todd, J. 2007. *Through the Darkness – A Life in Zimbabwe*. Cape Town: Zebra Press, 246-7.

⁸⁵⁸ CCJP/LRF, 1997: 73.

acknowledgement of complicity in the violence that had so adversely affected thousands of people in the Matabeleland region.

“I understand that in 1987 after signing the Unity Accord, and the integration of some of the people from the Matabeleland into mainstream government activities and cabinet officials, there was a blanket amnesty that was issued by the then-Prime Minister and that in itself ‘prevented’ prosecutions from taking place: holding people who were engaged in these activities...accountable. *And in a way, that is viewed by majority of people to be an obstacle to the healing process and the need to unite the people of the country.*”⁸⁵⁹

The conception of *impunity*, while serving a legal function of pardon and a political function of ‘peace’ (as the cessation of war) is not embodied with the essential ingredients necessary for individual or corporate healing and psycho-social recovery. A blanket amnesty, as opposed to *conditional* amnesty, applied in a post-violent reconstruction effort, becomes a short circuit to reconciliation. A body of scholarly research continues to amass within the ‘justice’ disciplines (legal, restorative, transitional and indigenous)⁸⁶⁰ which attests to the notion that genuine justice hinges on those who have acted in the wrong embracing some form of responsibility for the dire consequences of their violations. It was precisely this pivotal principle of *acknowledgement*; a confession and an obligatory acceptance of past wrong-doing that was denied the Matabeleland constituency by the ZANU-PF in this Unity Accord. This collective wound continues to fester in Matabeleland even up to the present.

8.2.3. Unity for whom? The failings of ‘Top-down’ Approaches to Peace

History has shown that political compacts that are jettisoned at a national level often fall short of finding a satisfactory means of translating the benefits of the agreement to the masses on the ground. The Zimbabwe Unity Accord was no exception. In order to truly integrate peace across the vertical sectors of society, extraordinary measures of mass-based consultation, direct participation and time are required. Beyond this, the civil society and religious networks which remain most closely connected to the community

⁸⁵⁹ Interview: SD1, Johannesburg, South Africa - 18/08/06 – (Shona Human Rights Lawyer).

⁸⁶⁰ Helmick, R. & Peterson, R. (eds.) 2001. *Forgiveness and Reconciliation – Religion, Public Policy and Conflict Transformation*. Philadelphia / London: Templeton Foundation Press; Galaway, B. & Hudson, J. (eds.) 1996. *Restorative Justice: International Perspectives*. Amsterdam / NY: Kugler Publications and Criminal Justice Press; Bloomfield, D., Barnes, T. & Huyse, L. (eds.) 2003. *Reconciliation After Violent Conflict – A Handbook*. Stockholm: International IDEA (Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance).

contexts must be mobilised to use their human and infrastructural resources in a concerted manner in order to educate, advocate and delivery programmes for peace at a local level. So while there were voices of praise coming from both politicians and peasants who felt they had gained from the Unity Accord, they consisted of a minority grouping. At the signing ceremony of the Unity Accord, Dr. Joshua Nkomo spoke in sombre tones, yet clearly mustering a future-focused discourse:

“Comrades, we in Zapu have always said, and I continue on this signing day and this sealing of the fact, that the unity we have attached our names to, Cde Robert Gabriel Mugabe and Joshua Nkomo, means the real unity of our people. There is no going back. The continuance of this unity is essential for the future of our country. We do not want to leave behind us the legacy of division of the people of Zimbabwe. We want to lay the beginning of the foundation of one people, one nation.”⁸⁶¹

One villager from Esigodini, Matabeleland spoke of the Unity Accord in glowing terms:

“Unity has brought a new Zimbabwe: it’s as if we’d just become independent. A lot of bad things were happening in the villages in Matabeleland, but now many development projects have begun. Unity has changed every body’s life.”⁸⁶²

To its credit, the Unity Accord made provision for the offer of government posts to former disenfranchised ZAPU politicians who had been dismissed in 1982, and the release of ex-ZIPRA political prisoners who had been detained after the discovery of arms caches. While these shifts appeared to be positive progress, the ordinary Matabele citizen on the ground perceived them to be primarily benefiting a few political leaders at the top (a ‘*top-down approach*’).

“I don’t think it’s effective. I think, at least from my observation, *the Unity Accord was something that happened at the top level of the parties*, ZANU and ZAPU, these two parties. But it was not something that happened at the grass-root level, and so because of that, even if you talk ‘unity’ out there ... but generally speaking, if you follow the trends out there you’ll discover that there is no unity here; the unity is up there. That’s why there’s always an emphasis from the top to say, ‘we signed the Unity Accord, we signed the Unity Accord’. That message has been drilled, as it were, into the hearts and minds of people, because people really don’t know, they never accepted that. That’s why today there are still parties that

⁸⁶¹ ‘Speeches made at the Signing of the Unity Agreement at State House, Harare, 22/12/1987’, (1988) *Sapem (Harare)* February, No. 5, 25-27.

⁸⁶² Staunton, I. (ed.) 1990. *Mothers of the Revolution*. Harare: Baobab Books, 82.

want to call themselves ZAPU, they want to revive that. *Because they 'know' there is no unity down here, the unity was up there.*"⁸⁶³

There are numerous reasons for this conviction that the Unity Accord represents a failed 'top-down' approach to peace. Some respondents subscribe to the theory that the top leadership on both sides of the political divide concocted a scheme whereby they would *restrict the sharing of the national wealth* between each other and their extended families, and thereby exempt themselves from the responsibility to distribute the nation's wealth (rich natural resources) among all the population.

"In the first place, I remember hearing about the Unity Accord, that ZANU and ZAPU ha[ve] signed the Unity Accord. People had a sigh of relief, of course. And it had become a popular slogan 'there is unity now'. But if you look at it from an intellectual perspective, this is what we call a 'post-conflict resolution strategy', the elite make a pact between themselves, they see we have common interests. From ZANU and from ZAPU we fought for this country. And the fact that we fought for this country we need to benefit ahead of everybody. And why spend time fighting instead of spending time sharing. This to me is the logic behind ZAPU accepting to be accommodated. *It was actually a 'class' accommodation. We are in the same class with similar class interests. The ideological issues away, but generally what unites us is the class interest.* And honestly, between ZANU and ZAPU, ideologically there is no clear division except personality clashes. And I think over the years they realized that they are more similar than different, and for economic advancement as persons, we can accommodate each other. And this happens at top level."⁸⁶⁴

This intriguing view reduces the Unity Accord to the binding interests of *class* and especially the shared desire of material accumulation of the new rising elite.⁸⁶⁵ While this argument presents an interesting, albeit cynical angle to the unity agreement, its plausibility is questionable. This is not so much because of unquestioning revolutionary idealism that would never assign such selfish motives to liberation fighters turned bourgeoisie, but more on the basis of the feasibility of a hidden agenda of this nature producing an equitable outcome. Put differently, in any commitment to 'divide the spoils' there must be *equal* power between the parties in order for it to be just and beneficial. In the Zimbabwe Unity Accords, this was not the case; the negotiating table was uneven.

⁸⁶³ Interview: DN1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 29/03/07 – (Ndebele Church Leader whose father was killed by 5th Brigade soldiers in 1984).

⁸⁶⁴ Interview: SG1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 20/12/07 - (Ndebele Professor of political science, researcher and author).

⁸⁶⁵ Ayittey, G. 1998. *Africa in Chaos*. New York: St Martins Press, 348-371.

The ZANU-PF not only came to the talks with more social capital (political power), they also brought complete control of the material capital (economic power) to the negotiation process. In this instance, while the ZAPU political leaders who were incorporated into the ZANU-PF government may have personally benefitted from the material currency that accompanied their political positions, it was still *only* at the discretion of the ZANU-PF who maintained an upper hand throughout the process. As they assimilated into ZANU-PF, the former ZAPU leaders forfeited real control in decision-making over the corporate redistribution of wealth in the country. Thus, these former ZAPU leaders still remained in a position of *dependence* on the ZANU-PF after the Unity Accord.

Others suggest that the Unity Accord represented a failed top-down approach because there was not enough consultation of the people and therefore it *did not retain the ownership* of the masses. Key to the measurement of this ‘ownership’ of the people is the participation of citizens from all sectors of society in the mending of relationships across ethnic-political divides. This, according to the following respondent remains as ‘unfinished business’ from the Matabeleland violence of the 1980s:

“Well, from the angle of the politics of ZAPU at that time, having been at a disadvantaged position, it was fine, to go into bed with ZANU-PF... purely for stopping the massacres; for short-term purposes that’s fine. *But as a long-term strategy that looks into the interests of the Ndebele people, it is not anything to talk about.* We are not represented by people that we have selected and appointed to go in there. The agreement was between Joshua Nkomo and Robert Gabriel Mugabe, their signatures. And I believe even the Shonas have a right to turn around and say ‘we are not committed to this agreement because there is nothing that united the Ndebeles and the Shonas. *It united the political leaders of ZAPU and political leader of ZANU into that unity and it did not unite the ethnic groups.* So, ‘that’ unity itself was alright for stopping the massacres; ZANU-PF was satisfied with that; that is fine. But, as a solution to ethnic divide and ethnic differences that has a bearing on what is going to happen in the future, that have a bearing on the causes of the massacres in the early 80s, it never did anything.”⁸⁶⁶

Still others posit that the Unity Accord failed because of the *lack of significant material developmental progress* accomplished in the Matabeleland region since its inception. The reasoning here is straight forward, if there was truly unity than all the people of Zimbabwe could surely have put their differences aside and with the enabling

⁸⁶⁶ Interview: PK1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 30/03/07 – (A prominent member of Ndebele Royal Family).

function of a unified government, worked to prosper the nation of Zimbabwe over the past two decades. This is certainly not the current reality for many Zimbabweans:

“When I first heard of that I was happy, just hearing that. Because I thought [to] myself this man Nkomo is wise. He has seen what is happening to his people...how they are being butchered on a daily basis and he opts to submit to the new government even though he doesn’t agree with everything that is going on. I actually said he is a hero; he has the people in heart and not himself. But as time went on, I began to see that it was just a Unity Accord on paper, like some other unity accords that ha[ve] been signed elsewhere, not only in Zimbabwe. Or where people have been celebrating lying down of arms and amnesty is being given and so and so on and yet, in a short while or if that kind of peace was short-lived, then there was...war again breaking out. If that Unity Accord had actually brought us somewhere, there would not have been the kind of fighting that we have had [current violence since 2000]. Let me really call it ‘fighting’ because even if strangers go across Zimbabwe’s soil and they don’t see it, but we see it, we know it. Because even when it comes to employment and so on there is so much nepotism and so on, you see the type of unfairness that on a daily basis one ethnic group should be progressing even at the expense of the other group. And all those wars are being fought all over; in our industries, in our government, at home, [in] the community, and so on. *So when it comes to that I still feel like that Unity Accord would have accomplished the wishes of the men who actually submitted and caused that to come into, maybe, effect. But it didn’t go nowhere to alleviate our problems. So for me for the Unity Accord has not helped.*”⁸⁶⁷

From the above discussion, it is evident that the Unity Accord was experienced as an imposed settlement on the people of Matabeleland and was clearly only profitable for a few political leaders at the top. It did not sufficiently allow the citizenry to partake in the conversation about the meaning and appropriate implementation of a viable unification process, and it certainly did not bring tangible results in the advancement of sustainable development in the Matabeleland region.

8.2.4. Who Owns the Unity?

For some of the former dissidents (ex-ZIPRA soldiers) a fascinating narrative emerged after the Unity Accord. Evidently, in a bid to exert their rightful role in the post-independence violence, these dissidents articulated a mission that located the concept of *unity* as a central organising motif in their dissident struggle. In what appeared to be a

⁸⁶⁷ Interview: NM1, Mtshabezi, Zimbabwe – 28/06/06 – (Female Ndebele Peace Activist working with rural Matabeleland women).

public relations exercise, these former soldiers embarked on a campaign to reinvent themselves as the progenitors of the unity cause all along. Most likely, this co-option of the national unity script for their own enhancement was motivated by the drive to clarify their position as insurgents. Hence, they felt the need to re-interpret their battered image; a conversion from being seen as ‘violent rebels’ to that of ‘noble warriors’. The following scripts give credence to this dissident counter-narrative that attached itself to a visionary horizon which claimed guidance from lofty ideals such as ‘national unity’ as its organisational aim from the beginning of the struggle. In the words of one former dissident: “*What we had been fighting for we achieved, the unity between Zanu/Zapu.*”⁸⁶⁸ The following texts from former dissidents (ex-ZIPRA combatants) summarise their views of the Unity Accord and the subsequent amnesty that resulted:

“We were not afraid. Because we were based on unity, that was our major point, to build a unity accord. For everyone to live without fear, to become one people. We were not afraid of that [to give up under amnesty], because that [unity] was in our ideology. You cannot be afraid of your ideology. You sacrifice, whether you die or you survive.”⁸⁶⁹

“Unity between our parties has removed the reason why many of us were fighting. We felt excluded from Government after independence, despite having fought for our freedom from the Rhodesians. The Government, however, has now offered as a chance to rebuild.”⁸⁷⁰

Indeed, for the dissidents who found themselves marooned in the bush in 1987, the Unity Accord embodied their only *hope* for mercy and the sparing of their lives from certain capital death. It did not necessarily improve their physical and economic well-being, however, and as such there was the motivation to at least augment their socio-political standing in society. This they did by refocusing the debate on unity and colonising its conception as that of their own. In so doing they accomplished three objectives: First, by claiming to have had unity as their overarching goal throughout the struggle, they were able to ‘*save-face*’ in the disgraceful wake of their own complicity in a number of high profile acts of severe violence. Second, by aligning themselves with unity, it allowed them to emerge as *ideological purists*; the keepers of the revolutionary

⁸⁶⁸ Yap, 2001: 274.

⁸⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁷⁰ Mackay, J. 1988. ‘Dissidents come home’, *New African* July, 19.

call. Third, identifying with the cause of unity provided them with the opportunity to reclaim their *destiny* as the faithful remnant of the struggle. Each of these narrative factors assisted these few dissidents in their endeavour to regain the moral high ground after the devastating results of the Matabeleland violence.

However, not all ex-ZIPRA narratives so readily embraced the unity discourse, especially those who believed that their revolutionary approval depended on their strength in military battle. In contradictory fashion to the idealistic discourse on unity, there were other texts that described the great chasm of mistrust that engulfed the relationships between ZANU-PF and ZAPU during the negotiations leading up to the Unity Accord agreement. Envisioning the Unity Accord as yet another attempt by ZANU-PF to “trap” ZAPU, rumoured scripts spoke of ZIPRA military back-up plans just waiting to happen:

“You’ve also heard, and this is now jumping forward to when the Unity Accord was finally signed but, it was such a precarious time that, apparently there were [military] Units on standby. *And what I piece together of Gukurahundi since then is, those Units that were on standby waited for just one message from Joshua Nkomo, or potentially from my uncle, but from the ZAPU side, that if it was a trap.* I think very few people trusted Mugabe ...[and] if it was a trap and the Unity Accord wasn’t genuine, that the war would resume, the Civil War. And a lot of the stashes of arms were basically kept back for that purpose; those are the rumours I hear.”⁸⁷¹

Whether or not the rumour above is ‘accurate’ is hard to ascertain. In this case, the research found no corroborating statements to verify this story and thus, it may be a well-manufactured narrative of perceived military might which gave added value to the ex-ZIPRA soldier’s dented image. This narrative of military advantage supplied a kind of psychological anaesthesia to the wounded pride of the ex-ZIPRA combatants; a false *sense of power* required for the ZAPU/ZIPRA alliance in order to assuage the humiliation of having to approach the Unity Accord negotiations as the weakened, defeated partner.

8.3. Unity Accord: A Compromised Ceasefire

In defiance to the ZANU-PF-generated narrative, the ZAPU-ZIPRA counter-narrative acknowledged the Unity Accord as an agreement for ‘peace’, but solely

⁸⁷¹ Interview: TM1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 01/11/07 – (Shona Businessman whose relative was a prominent leader in the ZANU-PF government).

motivated by a desperate need to stop the killing and bloodshed that had ravished the Matabeleland people and their region. In the assessment of the more serious oppositional thinkers, the Unity Accord was at best a compromised ceasefire and at worst a tool for the imposition of uniformity. In conflict theory terminology the resultant, prevailing outcome of this unity settlement would be classified as a *negative* peace as opposed to a *positive* peace.⁸⁷² Negative peace is descriptive of an atmosphere where there has been the cessation of war, or the absence of direct violence. The use of the word ‘negative’ refers to the action of negation (e.g. negating war or violence). In contrast, positive peace refers to a constructive process whereby the negated space (now absent from violence and war) is filled with the energy and activity of intentional social construction toward harmonious co-existence. Negative peace would be associated with the short-term activity of *peace-keeping*, whereas positive peace would be associated with the activity of long-term *peace-building*. The following transcripts harness the short-comings of the Unity Accord with humour and candour:

“By and large, yes, it [the Unity Accord] stopped the altercations that prevailed then. I mean, people came together and accepted [it] for what it was, for what it brought, for what it promised. Whether it’s brought what people hoped for and wished for or not, is another question... But, come [to] ‘unity’, so it’s a way of looking at things at the time, yeah. *Horses for courses; the course is long...yeah well, it’s a donkey, it’s a shorter course which aims at something nearer and attainable.*”⁸⁷³

“Well, the Unity Agreement was actually about ... *it wasn’t a good bargain but it was a bargain* and what it said was ‘okay, you people have been imprisoned and tortured and so on. You can now run Matabeleland. We will run Zimbabwe and you can run Matabeleland’. *So the people who had been running Matabeleland had to stay with the Unity Agreement.*”⁸⁷⁴

“...I had a chance to write about the Unity Accord, looking at its implications; politically, economically, and the aspect of development...To the people of Matabeleland, that was the time where the war ended. The war didn’t end in 1980, but the war ended in 1987...People were still burying their beloved ones and then it was still a painful time...*And some people even went to a point to say ‘no, no,*

⁸⁷² Galtung, J. 1996. *Peace by peaceful means: peace and conflict, development and civilization*. London / Thousand Oaks / New Delhi: Sage Publications.

⁸⁷³ Interview: DN2, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 30/03/07- (Ndebele retired journalist and one of the editors for the state-run newspaper the Chronicle during the 1980s).

⁸⁷⁴ Interview: TR1, Oxford, UK – 21/10/08 – (White British professor, researcher and widely published author who is a leading authority on the history of Zimbabwe).

we will not really take part in this unity thing'. They felt it was not really 'unity' because they are feeling that Matabeleland is still discriminated and marginalised in a lot of areas."⁸⁷⁵

In the case of the Unity Accord of Zimbabwe, the resultant status of negative peace was blamed on the ZANU-PF government and characterised by the lack of transformation in antagonistic relations with the opposition, the continuation of political structures of division and marginalisation, and public systems of conflict resolution that created alienation as opposed to rapprochement. Specifically, this research surfaced a conceptualisation of negative peace which was defined by what ZAPU / ZIPRA saw as the employment of *coercive violence* (the Gukurahundi) as a means to drive Nkomo to the signing table, the application of *opponent humiliation* as form of punishment in order to further weaken the opposition, and a forced *uniform assimilation* into the ZANU-PF governance conglomerate as opposed to a mutual power-sharing arrangement. The above three components of how the opposition perceived the Unity Accord form the basis of the deliberations in the section.

8.3.1. Joshua Nkomo: A Subdued, Silenced, Statesman

A majority of the interview respondents in this research indicated that they believed that Joshua Nkomo was 'forced' by the circumstances of severe violence to sign the Unity Accord. That is, in general, Nkomo was perceived to be a principled politician who found the terms of the Unity agreement less than satisfactory, but felt compelled to sign it for the sake of 'his' people who were being massacred at an alarming rate. In so doing, Nkomo accepted the risk of being misunderstood as too accommodating, too compromising, and too 'soft' a negotiator by his own political party and the constituency he represented. His political reputation among his most radical revolutionary followers was considerably tarnished as a result of signing the Accord:

"When the old man realized that the innocent people are dying, innocent people are disappearing, small children are losing education, he called senior officials of ZAPU to make a Unity Accord agreement. Some of them refused, Mabena, Malunga, were of those that refused. They said 'No, the best thing is to [do] this, let us write our own things this side, and ZANU writes theirs on this side. Then

⁸⁷⁵ Interview: CM2, Kitwe, Zambia – 09/05/07 - (Ndebele teacher and community development worker with Orphans and Vulnerable Children, former Political Activist and Youth Leader for ZAPU in the early 1980s).

[we] compare which things to choose and pick [for] the unity'. *Then, this man called John Nkomo who is serving the government now, he made a disaster. He was sent there [and] he took the document of ZAPU, and he threw it away. And he only considered what ZANU-PF has written. He put that to [Joshua] Nkomo. The old man was very old; he didn't realize what was written, 'Please Mr Nkomo, just sign here'.* Then after signing this, when [Joshua] Nkomo called the ZAPU officials when he ha[d] signed the paper [they asked], 'what is this?' Whatever ... they have already signed. So that made ZANU to remain up to now."⁸⁷⁶

This transcript comes from an ex-ZIPRA combatant who later referred to the entire Unity Accord as a "scheme" meant to "trick" Nkomo and who thus concluded that, "No, there was not a Unity."⁸⁷⁷ While this source is both reliable and believable in that he was well-positioned in the political machinery of the struggle, this same insider-perspective lends itself to multiple conspiracy theories. Here again, without corresponding scripts to give validation to this theory, it is most likely that this text about the incompetence of one particular ZAPU leader (John Nkomo) who was tasked to carry the ZAPU mandate and yet failed to do so, may have signified the 'best' plausible narrative explanation for the Unity Accord debacle for die-hard ZAPU/ ZIPRA revolutionaries. This explanation and the subsequent blame of one individual offered the radical elements in ZAPU/ZIPRA a conflict 'scapegoat' necessary for the purging of themselves and the now compromised liberation cause. This was a narrative alibi that could be readily internalised by the ZAPU/ZIPRA alliance in order to produce meaning out of the great *sense of betrayal* that they felt in the signing of the Unity pact.

However, as indicated in the early part of this section, there was a considerable amount of expressed empathy for Nkomo's decision to save lives, no matter how it came about:

"I think Joshua Nkomo recognised that unless he reached an accommodation with ZANU-PF, those scales of simmering conflicts would just continue. And I think that for principled reasons he decided to stop that by, you know, joining the coalition... the Unity Accord. He has been criticised a great deal and he was sort of just selling out and he saw it as an elite pack that benefited those senior leaders of ZAPU. But, whilst that may have been an element, *my own view is that Nkomo himself was primarily dominated by the desire to bring peace.* That's why he did it."⁸⁷⁸

⁸⁷⁶ Interview: AN2, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 12/09/07 – (Ndebele Ex-ZIPRA Soldier).

⁸⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁷⁸ Interview: DC1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe - 13/09/07 (White Zimbabwean Human Rights Lawyer and politician).

*“No. You know why Nkomo signed, because a lot of Ndebeles were dying, a lot of ZAPU supporters, they were being killed. Nkomo just wanted to stop this killing, not because he wanted, he didn’t want [the Unity Accord]. And he told Mugabe, if you ask others, that he can’t swallow that [the killings].”*⁸⁷⁹

*“...although at a certain point, people of Matabeleland said Joshua Nkomo betrayed them because he accepted to join ZANU-PF. But if you really look at what was happening then, Joshua Nkomo didn’t want to see many lives being lost in the way things were happening in Matabeleland. And he was feeling that Matabeleland was getting into deeper, deeper pains and deeper losses and he said ‘no, let me join these guys for the sake of peace’. He was a man who loved to see people living peacefully, and I think he was a hero.”*⁸⁸⁰

*“...there was no unity at all, really. Only that the Ndebele people were afraid of being beaten up and that’s one part that Joshua Nkomo had to come to, as a rescue[r]; that if he signs the Unity Accord, the Shonas will stop killing the Ndebele people, saying at least ‘we are one’.”*⁸⁸¹

For the Matabeleland region, the Unity Accord resulted in a momentous sigh of relief. Metaphorically speaking, the Matabele masses could now breathe again, survey the damage and decide how to pick-up the pieces of their lives and slowly return to a semblance of order and normalcy. However, in the language of trauma recovery, after the numbness of denial has passed, the anger and subsequent *grieving* over what has been lost begins. The Unity Accord ushered in a variant of peace, but in the process a number of acute *losses* were also felt on a personal level in Matabeleland. With the signing of the Unity Accord, ZAPU was forced to grieve the loss of the critical role of *influence* that Nkomo had played which had been splashed in colourful strokes of paint across the political landscape of Zimbabwe for 30 years (1957-1987).

“So I think [when] Nkomo joined ZANU-PF, he had no choice, and they knew that he had no choice. And even when he was there, he had no influence. As it is now, Joe Nkomo, [Joseph] Msika, all those people [former ZAPU leaders], they don’t have any influence. The political bureau of ZANU-PF is controlled by [a] few ZANU-PF guys. Those from ZAPU they are just few there but they are just useless. No, it was not a power sharing because even today if you can count ministerial position[s], you count ZAPU guys who are there, otherwise there is not

⁸⁷⁹ Interview: JD1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 15/09/06 – (Female Ndebele NGO activist advocating for women and refugees rights).

⁸⁸⁰ Interview: CM2, Kitwe, Zambia – 09/05/07 - (Ndebele teacher and community development worker with Orphans and Vulnerable Children, former Political Activist and Youth Leader for ZAPU in the early 1980s).

⁸⁸¹ Interview: MS1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 11/09/07 - (Ndebele male, rural farmer from Tsholotsho, Matabeleland and primary survivor of Gukurahundi violence).

even one, there's only one I think or two. Look at Ambassadors. So, it was not power sharing because power sharing they were supposed to sit down and share the ministerial positions, ambassadors, secretary of ministries, commissioners, all those things, even within the army, [and] the police. Power sharing, it means you share 'every' dept. of the government."⁸⁸²

Not only was Nkomo's important contribution of political influence subsumed in the Unity Accord agreement, but as an oppositional political party ZAPU also had to grieve the loss of their voice of advocacy which was *silenced* after the unity merger. This 'voice' that had been silenced was epitomised in the booming, passionate and fiery oration of their nationalist leader, Joshua Nkomo:

*"After 1987 Joshua Nkomo who had previously been outspoken, valuable, emotional, and always the source of a good quote from the press, became completely silent. So he made a bargain, you know...and I think he did it because he didn't want to see his people slaughtered anymore, so he didn't want to live in fear for his life. And he accepted a position of an elevated position that gave him a great deal of money and comfort, and also he didn't have to worry about his house being raided, his family being arrested and others being killed and that...I also think he had a heart and in the end he could have just said, 'I don't want anything to do with Robert Mugabe', but I think he saw the suffering of the Ndebele people throughout, by 1987 and thought 'there is no way that this can be stopped unless I make a devil's bargain with Robert Mugabe'. And I grant him that place in history; that he cared enough about his people that he was willing to silence himself and go into a pact with ZANU-PF...in order to stop the murder of his people...But he kept silent about that and when he died he was given a hero's burial. Whether or not...he died a broken man...I can't tell you that...[Nkomo was] Zimbabwe's leading nationalist and then was a silent partner to a government that he detested."*⁸⁸³

Lastly, the Matabeleland had to grieve the loss of a great *statesman* fondly referred to as the 'Father of Zimbabwe'. Nkomo had articulated the vision for national independence from the start of the Liberation struggle and over the decades he had meticulously nurtured a broad-based network (both continental and global in nature) of political and financial support for the cause of freedom in Zimbabwe. After the signing of the Unity Accord, all of this history and the socio-political resources that ZAPU symbolised and represented were amalgamated under the shadow of the ZANU-PF government. For

⁸⁸² Interview: RM1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 14/09/06 – (Ndebele former security officer for opposition party and survivor of severe torture as a political prisoner under the ZANU-PF government).

⁸⁸³ Interview: AM1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 10/08/06 – (White American Journalist who lived in Zimbabwe from 1980 until he was deported by the ZANU-PF government).

whatever his faults, posthumously Nkomo has been remembered most for his gracious diplomatic manner and his sincere concern for the people he served.

“Yes, yes. In other words, rationality was more in Joshua Nkomo. When Joshua Nkomo hugged Robert Mugabe in 1987 and together they raised their hands, *people were saying Joshua Nkomo is a statesman*, because here is Mugabe getting away with absolute deception...He [Mugabe] had agreed to many things. One of the many things he had agreed to was that when he goes out of office as President, a leader from ZAPU would come in as President, first of the party, and then if he wins the election, then of the nation. Mugabe has consistently rejected that now after Joshua Nkomo has died...*And so you do have a situation where people would actually see right through Robert Mugabe and say ‘No, Joshua Nkomo is more the statesman than Robert Mugabe’*, more so today, yes.”⁸⁸⁴

For many Matabele, all that the Unity Accord signified was not only excessively painful, but it was also infuriatingly convenient and opportunistic on the part of the ruling party. After the signing of this pact, the ZANU-PF government clung to all the unifying images it could muster as its legitimacy waned. The nation was subject to a barrage of repetitive state-generated media footage depicting Mugabe and Nkomo signing for ‘peace and reconciliation’. For citizenry of Matabeleland this media blitz not only denoted betrayal, more importantly, it remonstrated with the obvious use of ‘selective memory’ and a sinister, monolithic recounting of history on the part of the ruling party.

“That’s hypocrisy, as far as I’m concerned. I’m saying to myself; Nkomo is not far more popular now that he’s dead than when he was alive. When he was alive he was labelled a dissident, an enemy of the state. But now he’s late, he’s being used to kind of make the people in Matabeleland to be part and parcel of the systems.”⁸⁸⁵

For the ZANU-PF, Nkomo was *only* a hero after he has capitulated to the violent pressure and excessive use of force by the Fifth Brigade in Matabeleland. *Only* after the repressive carnage of the State’s military machinery had taken its full effect; *only* after he was forced to conform to the image and brute power of ZANU-PF (unity as uniformity); *only* after he had been grafted into the grand-narrative of the ruling elite, then, and *only* then was Nkomo’s life celebrated and honoured as a hero of the people and the nation. All the historical narratives of intrigue and nuance, the stories of the who, what, why and how of

⁸⁸⁴ Interview: JM1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 26/02/08 – (Shona Professor of Political Science in Zimbabwe).

⁸⁸⁵ Interview: AN1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 12/09/07 – (Ndebele Church leader and Peace activist).

the life and politics of Joshua Nkomo and all the complexity of what he stood for, and what he stood against were *trivialised* by the narrative discourse of the ZANU-PF, held hostage in the immediate set of circumstances (the Unity Accord), and *thus, ultimately relegated to the halls of silence in a forgotten history*.

8.3.2. The Humiliation of Uniformity

In the best of negotiated political settlements, for the parties locked in the impasse of violent conflict to agree to share power requires certain degree of *humility*. When one is called to release deeply cherished, seemingly non-negotiable ideals and bow in equitable respect to the one who was once the ‘enemy’, all pride and arrogance must be reined in. Unfortunately, this mutual interchange of humble posturing was not evident in the Unity Accord agreement. Instead, respondents affiliated with ZAPU articulated a deep sense of *humiliation* as they were constrained to conform to the ZANU-PF rubric of reality.

“And of course when people ask him [Nkomo] why he consented, he said he wanted to save lives. So you can see he doesn’t have things to bargain with. His was merely to save lives by [humbling himself], simple. *So this unity if we are to talk about [it] was a way of humbling ourselves in case those in power would have mercy on us as Ndebeles*. But then what’s surprising is why he [Mugabe] doesn’t have mercy on us. If we are on our bellies and still he doesn’t have mercy on us. Why is he not merciful?”⁸⁸⁶

In the subsequent transcript, the interviewee gives the impression that the pact that was made would be better characterised as a kind of ‘uniformity’ as opposed to a ‘unity’ accord.

“‘Reconciliation’ is not an acceptance that there are many different voices, many different groups that are working together. ‘Reconciliation’ became a thing where, you know, *‘you come in and you accept our uniform voice. Accept the status quo’ and specifically ‘don’t question our version of how things happened in the past and are happening now*. You...don’t expect within reconciliation to give a different view of things because reconciliation means you accept our view. We will let you live your life but you must accept our narrative, our view of things’. And that was true of the Whites, and it was also true of ZAPU. And it [Unity Accord] actually was not a reconciliatory process, it was not a process of embracing all variety of ethnic groups, of opinions in Zimbabwe, but it was an

⁸⁸⁶ Interview: BK1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 26/06/06 - (Ndebele ZAPU politician and professor in the 1980s who fled into exile from 1983-1985 after surviving several death attempts during the period of Gukurahundi violence).

imposition of a single saying, you know, ‘*everybody’s in the tent but then there’s only going to be one voice that’s going to heard in that tent*’, and that’s consistent.”⁸⁸⁷

The various elements of the ZANU-PF demand for uniformity and their significance for ZAPU are unearthed in the subsequent section.

8.3.3. ZAPU was ‘Swallowed-Up’

Many opposition politicians viewed the Unity Accord with suspicion perceiving it to be the capstone trophy of the ZANU-PF in its campaign to solidify the vision for a one-party state. Many civilians on-the-ground interpreted the Unity Accord as a structural ‘deception’ that forced the ZAPU/ZIPRA alliance to succumb to the ZANU-PF mould of *uniformity* as opposed to a call to *unity* amidst the diversity that characterized the Zimbabwean people as a nation. Thus, the oppositional counter-narrative that was nurtured at that time was a cynical script that spoke of ZAPU/ZIPRA being invited (read here co-opted) into a system of ‘sameness’ or forced into becoming ‘like’ ZANU-PF which ultimately meant embracing the official manuscript and policies of the meta-narrative of the ZANU-PF as the ruling party. The language of analogy that surfaced repetitiously throughout this research was that of ZAPU being ‘*swallowed up*’ by the ZANU-PF.

“*So, if you can’t beat them, you swallow them. And then they start...And I saw...a relationship between ‘a threatened breakdown in negotiations’ and ‘escalation of violence’. Now, when a man is threatened to violence and sometimes even violence meted against them, and then you are dragged to the negotiations table, you are not negotiating on equal terms. This is why some of us will say ‘ZAPU was swallowed’. I know some will try to argue [putting] things theoretically but really, it was swallowed.*”⁸⁸⁸

The discourse enveloping the metaphorical ideation of being ‘swallowed up’ possesses two noteworthy domains of meaning. It speaks to both the *physical* and the *psycho-social* dimensions of meaning. First, at the experiential, physical level it provides an apt description of the visceral feeling that accompanies the process of being chewed up, choked down, ingested and digested with the end result being the loss of essential

⁸⁸⁷ Interview: AM1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 10/08/06 – (White American Journalist who lived in Zimbabwe from 1980 until he was deported by the ZANU-PF government).

⁸⁸⁸ Interview: PN1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 30/03/07 – (Ndebele historian, author, researcher and archivist).

substance or becoming wastage. While this verbiage embodies a rather earthy, biological analogy it gives expression to the gut-wrenching procedure of political assimilation and ultimately elimination felt by the ZAPU as it was consumed by the far-reaching appetite of the ZANU-PF-driven Unity Accord agreement.

Second, the phraseology of ‘swallowed up’ also possesses a psycho-social meaning. It encompasses a description of a kind of death; a dying to one’s own essence or identity; as in the phraseology of ‘being swallowed up in death’. At the same time, in the course of dying there is always the commensurate process of *lament*. The progress of being ‘swallowed up’ inevitably evokes certain emotion which is located and grounded in the travail of lament. The word ‘lament’ is an ancient concept imbued with rich understandings of not only the identification of loss and the grieving of what could have been, but also entailing the venting of anger and revolt, introspective remembering, as well as the search for a future-view; one which could lead to destructive despair or restorative hope.⁸⁸⁹ When ZAPU felt like it had figuratively lost its nationalist leader, Joshua Nkomo in the signing of the Unity Accord, a grieving of that *individual* loss occurred (see section 8.3.1. of this chapter). In a similar vein, this personal grieving process is mirrored in the *collective* journey of lament, the ‘valley of the shadow of death’ that ZAPU was forced to pass through in the midst of the ZANU-PF demand for a coerced uniformity in the outworking of the Unity Accord. The ZAPU lamented its lack of *representation* in governance structures, the lack of an *engaging role* to play in oppositional politics, the lack of *meaningful symbols*, and the lack of *access to development* in the Matabeleland region, even after the Unity Accord came into effect.

8.3.3.1. Lack of Representation

By incorporating the top ZAPU leaders into the ZANU-PF government the ordinary members of ZAPU on-the-ground felt profoundly isolated as there seemed to be no one to *represent* their cause. While the ZANU-PF continued to tout a message of all-inclusivity in the new Unity agreement, the Matabeleland constituency knew full well that their ‘cause’ was not satisfied in the Unity Accord and therefore, the incorporation of

⁸⁸⁹ Katongole, E. and Rice, C. 2008. *Reconciling All Things – A Christian Vision or Justice, Peace and Healing*. Illinois: Intervarsity Press, Chapter 5: The Discipline of Lament, 75-95.

their leaders into government was not securing them a voice, it was suffocating any advocacy on their behalf:

*“It’s ZAPU being collapsed into ZANU, not the people itself. Well, the people didn’t care, to them it was like, in fact, people said Nkomo betrayed them through it. Because now they had no representative... So it was the politicians, because people say it was the politicians who were greedy, they are leaving us in poverty. Because, funny enough, what happens is they say ‘these guys decided on a unity pact, oh. Because they want to move and stay in Harare, let them go’.”*⁸⁹⁰

*“It was ZAPU swallowed by ZANU-PF, and that’s it. The reason why I would say ‘swallowed’; if people like Dumiso Dabengwa, if people like Joe Nkomo, Sikanye Ndlovu, who are breaking up here and there as ZANU-PF stalwarts, were representative of our interests or could sit in the [ZANU-PF] Central Committee and say ‘this is what we stand for and we stand for Ndebele people and this is what Ndebele people are expecting’, and it can be listened [to] and we can see changes, than it can be fine. But they failed to represent us. We had problems in this part of the world [Matabeleland] which they needed to have represented us if that Unity was working. I mean they are not representative. So, that Unity Accord was something else and not an agreement that satisfies our needs.”*⁸⁹¹

Lamenting the Unity Accord as a “*Grand Deception*”, the following respondent delineates the lack of *representation* that occurs in a hierarchical governance system where power, decision-making and communication only flow in one direction, especially in the case of Joshua Nkomo assuming the role of Deputy President as a result of the Unity Accord:

*“There was no power sharing if one is President and the other one is Deputy President. It’s no power sharing; its delegation. The sender remains the sender. I’ll give you an illustration, which is classic, which is real. The President of Zimbabwe is the only position which can be elected nationally, where the whole country is one constituency. That is by design of ZANU PF. Everybody else is either appointed by the President or they have to run for elections in a constituency and win it. In...1995, I did the study of the elections. Joshua Nkomo, as a Member of Parliament, had to run for constituency. He was always winning. Anyway, in 1995 he said, ‘This is ridiculous. I am the Vice President and, I don’t need to run for a constituency. I have to represent the whole country and so I’m not going to take any constituency. If Robert Mugabe doesn’t appoint me to the position of Vice President, I will not be in parliament’. And of course Robert Mugabe had no choice but to appoint him.”*⁸⁹²

⁸⁹⁰ Interview: DL1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 11/08/06 - (Ndebele Journalist employed as a business editor for a prominent newspaper).

⁸⁹¹ Interview: PK1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 30/03/07 – (A prominent member of Ndebele Royal Family).

⁸⁹² Interview: JM1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 26/02/08 – (Shona Professor of Political Science in Zimbabwe).

In sum, this interview transcript associates a symbiotic relationship between political *recognition* and political *representation*. Hence, in the face of political disrespect (lack of recognition), Nkomo was willing to defy the function of representation and by consequence force the command function as the default mode of operation in the dictatorial structure of ZANU-PF to be given dominance.

8.3.3.2. Lack of an Engaging Role

More than just the grieving of the silencing of their nationalist leader and chief spokesperson, Joshua Nkomo, the ZAPU as an organisation lamented their *structural marginalisation* from any empowered, constructive role in government opposition. No doubt the Unity Accord had afforded them a place in the status quo, but in so doing ZAPU's distinctive role as standing in the political gap on behalf of minority groups and their issues of concern was effectively smothered.

“It is definitely not working. *You see the Unity Accord was a way of the ruling party, ZANU, swallowing ZAPU so that it could not have opposition. Joshua Nkomo's ZAPU was meant to be an opposition in parliament.* But oppositions in Africa are generally not accepted or tolerated, and therefore now in order to crush that opposition which was from Joshua Nkomo and from the Ndebeles, it was drawing support from the Ndebeles, it had to be crushed or coerced. It had to be crushed and therefore coerced into an agreement. Now therefore the Unity Accord has never really worked for the Ndebeles other than working for the Shonas to silence the Ndebeles.”⁸⁹³

The above interview respondent articulates the stark contrast of discourse polarisation between the official ZANU-PF narratives of the Unity Accord as a vehicle for increased power-sharing to the view from the ground which categorically saw the Unity Accord as the funeral ceremony for the ZAPU; a *structural blockage* of any organised opposition. On a side note, once again the reader is also struck with the entrenched use of ethnic-based language and the freedom with which this respondent utilises an interpretive discourse placing the Unity Accord as a machination of the ZANU-PF and therefore squarely in the hands of the Shona people, and the opposition a creation of ZAPU and therefore being seen as equivalent to being ‘Ndebele’.

⁸⁹³ Interview: FN1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 26/10/07 – (Ndebele Finance Manager and former employee of the ZANU-PF Ministry of Finance and the National Oil Company of Zimbabwe in the early 1980s).

8.3.3.3. Lack of Meaningful Symbols

Another source of lamentation for ZAPU was the disappearance of meaningful symbols in the public domain as a result of the Unity merger. Two crucial symbols that featured boldly in the Unity agreement were the name and emblem of the new emerging unity government. ZAPU insisted on a finding a synchronised name for the government that would bring together both of ZANU and ZAPU identities, and they advocated for a new logo for the unity government that was not a carry-over from either of the struggle movements' pasts. On both of these counts, ZANU-PF reneged after the signing was complete.

*"He [Mugabe] had agreed to a lot of things including changing the symbol of the party from the cockerel to an agreed symbol, I don't remember what it was, but he never did. He had refused to change the name of the combined party to something taking in the acronyms of both sides. He had insisted that it would simply continue to be called ZANU PF. And Joshua Nkomo had, you know, graciously agreed..."*⁸⁹⁴

*"And...the way it turned out, it turned out to be an elite pack because ZAPU was just swallowed and not even a ring left; in the name or the logo."*⁸⁹⁵

The power of political symbols is a topic of debate. Some would argue against the 'real' power of symbols and instead promote access to material or organisational structures as a more important source of power. However, in the scheme of narrative social construction, the power of symbol should never be underestimated. The significance of symbol in the political realm is large. Patriotic fervour and the mobilisation of masses of people to rally behind a collective political cause often hinges on the ability of government leaders to manipulate national symbols effectively. Traditional symbols such as flags, parading uniforms, military hardware, and national anthems are based on a system of sacred violence. However, new symbols of artistic mediums of inspiration, commemorative statuary, ceremonies of memorialisation, and infra-structure or architecture that represents national heritage and achievement, all lend

⁸⁹⁴ Interview: JM1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 26/02/08 – (Shona Professor of Political Science in Zimbabwe).

⁸⁹⁵ Interview: DC1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe - 13/09/07 (White Zimbabwean Human Rights Lawyer and politician).

themselves to the socio-political production of a constructive spirit of peace and unity within a nation or people group.⁸⁹⁶

Had the ZANU-PF agreed to change the name of the newly 'formed' unity government to include a hybrid identity that would have grafted ZAPU into the configuration, this would have sent a strong signal to the nation and the international community that ZANU-PF was serious about re-inventing itself and re-interpreting its position of dominance in the new equation of power-sharing which was an integral element to the Unity Accord protocol. However, by refusing this name change, the ZANU-PF sent the exact opposite message to ZAPU; our supreme control will remain the same and you as ZAPU will be asked to fall in line with the structures of authority that already exist. Likewise, with the ZANU-PF party logo (rooster) remaining the same, the implication for the merging ZAPU leadership was loud and clear; the ZANU-PF command, clout, and political muscle will continue without interruption. The magnitude of this latent threat and the symbolic power of visual images can be more easily appreciated if one has ever had the opportunity to drive past the ZANU-PF headquarters in Harare; a severe, towering building with a large emblem of the cockerel looming over the passer by's on the busy urban streets below. The message of this protruding political decal that punctuates the Harare sky is unmistakable: the ZANU-PF rule is here to stay.

8.3.3.4. Lack of Access to Development

In the previous Chapter 7 (Section 7.4.5.), the disciplinary function of withholding development to the Matabeleland region was discussed in detail. This development discipline was particularly instrumental in the politicisation of emergency relief aid (both food and water), and its specific use by ZANU-PF to punish its political opponent (ZAPU) during the Gukurahundi violence. However, with the signing of the Unity Accord, the dissident problem was purportedly resolved and there was renewed expectation among the Matabeleland populace that the Unity Accord would facilitate the opening up of restricted development channels. Unfortunately, Matabeleland was once again to be disappointed:

⁸⁹⁶ Schirch, L. 2005. *Ritual and Symbol in Peacebuilding*. Bloomfield, CT: Kumarian Press, Inc., Chapter 2: Understanding Ritual and Symbolic Acts, 15-30.

“(Respondent sneers). *It’s a Unity without unity itself.* Actually what the president of ZAPU wanted was that he wanted people not to die. He never meant that [farcical unity]... *Because even up to now they are celebrating something that does not exist, there is no unity. Even if you see here in Matabeleland, there is no development whatsoever,* just because they know what they are doing. Actually, we don’t know what really happened at Lancaster House, I think it is where the trouble started there.”⁸⁹⁷

“When I talk about the Unity and Independence, as far as I’m concerned this region has never had its Independence. The situation seems to be getting worse and worse for us unfortunately, even in a number of areas. *There was no ‘unity’ per say as far as I’m concerned. It was simple ZAPU joining ZANU, that’s it. Nothing in this region is really considered important by the present government.* I even imagine in a situation like this right now where we have no water in the city. The last dam that was built was 1976, and I’m told the population of Bulawayo has since grown by 77% also. The issue really here is not water, no. Last week some of the pastors went to the dam in Mtshabezi, 100 kilometres away, just to check if there’s anything happening bringing water to Bulawayo, there was nothing, but... They found about 40-something million cubic metres of water, and our [Bulawayo] consumption is about 200 000 cubic meters a day. So it may take us some three years or so if we were to take from that source. So our problem here is not water, but it is the way the government has used the region.”⁸⁹⁸

Not only did the misery of constricted development remain paramount in Matabeleland, the citizenry now felt the double punishment of *restricted* development and, with the incorporation of the ZAPU leaders into government, a *restricted* voice for promotion on their behalf. Although the Unity Accord was proclaimed as the channel through which all the peoples of Zimbabwe would now to be mainstreamed into national development protocols, in reality it served to coopt the oppositional leaders and thereby gag them from promulgating the development cause in Matabeleland. Put differently, the Unity Accord carried a double jeopardy for the region of Matabeleland; a continued neglect of development *coupled* with the submergence of all oppositional pressure. This coupling together of lack of service delivery and lack of advocacy had the cumulative affect of eliminating the forum for *appeal* in the process of appropriating development. Thus, the ZANU-PF government managed the Unity Accord in such a way that it had a

⁸⁹⁷ Interview: MS2, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 11/09/07 - (Ndebele male, rural farmer from Tsholotsho, Matabeleland and primary survivor of Gukurahundi violence).

⁸⁹⁸ Interview: AN1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 12/09/07 – (Ndebele Church leader and Peace activist).

layered subjugating effect on the Matabeleland region; ZAPU felt ‘swallowed up’ by ZANU-PF as they remained consumed in a quagmire of development delay. On top of this, they had lost their platform for appeal and protest on behalf of their cause of need.

8.4. Unity Accord: A Defining Moment

Regardless of one’s view of the Unity Accord, it became a *defining moment* in the political history of the Zimbabwean nation whereby the consummate power of the ZANU-PF meta-narrative was at its pinnacle of realisation, and the subjugated narratives of Matabeleland went into a season of hibernation. This dormant state lasted about a little over a decade until a new round of resistance and protest scripts manifested with the release of the comprehensive report on the Matabeleland massacres in 1997.⁸⁹⁹ Appearing as a mirage of the fruit of unity, those ten years (1988-1998) ushered in a *permissive democracy* that was given consent to by the ZANU-PF who seemingly turned a blind eye to new levels of freedom of speech and affiliation within the socio-economic networks across the nation. The following verses extracted from a poem written by Michael Nyathi give the sense of empowerment felt by civil society at that time:

“A dead civil society is a cancerous spot
It dulls and spoils the whole social pot
Leaving an insipid society embedded in slumber
Its fires being reduced to smoldering amber.

A lively civil society guarantees a bright future
We need to be informed through literature
Decisions on crucial issues shall be ours
Our children shall have all the powers.”⁹⁰⁰

During that period of years there was considerable expansion of civil liberties and the instruments of human rights, gender equity and the development of the rural poor were given new levels of expression. Also at that time, the independent media flourished at its height⁹⁰¹, and the economic strength and output of the country was seemingly being

⁸⁹⁹ Yap, 2001: 7. Yap describes this report as ‘the single most important text regarding the violence taking place in Matabeleland and Midlands during the 1980s’.

⁹⁰⁰ The Commonwealth Foundation. 2000. *Democratic Governance in Zimbabwe: Citizen Power*. London: Civil Society in the New Millennium, v.

⁹⁰¹ Nyarota, G. 2006. *Against the Grain – memoirs of a Zimbabwean Newsmen*. Cape Town: Zebra Press.

maintained until the downturn in the economy around 1998⁹⁰². Hence, while democracy appeared to be solidifying in Zimbabwe in the decade between 1988-1998, it was under the watchful, all-knowing surveillance of the ZANU-PF and eventually, when the economics began to spin completely out of control and political unrest began to rise, the ZANU-PF clamped down on civil society, unions, media, and the newly formed opposition and once again showed its true colours of violence. This time the ZANU-PF violence (killings, disappearances, torture, and imprisonment) no longer focused on Matabeleland but spread across the nation (including Mashonaland) giving vindication to the subjugated narratives about the nature of the ZANU-PF violence that the Matabele people had suppressed since 1987. The primary themes of these sublimated Matabeleland narratives were clustered around three critical convictions: the Unity Accord never represented an *authentic reconciliation*, the ZANU-PF would easily *commit this kind of violence again* given the ‘appropriate’ circumstances, and finally, the ZANU-PF had never expressed any *apology* and therefore had no genuine feelings of *remorse* for the massacres perpetrated in Matabeleland in the 1980s.

8.4.1. Reconciliation Unrecognisable

“Organized bands of Zipra followers were refusing to recognize the sovereignty of the government...If those who have suffered defeat adopt the unfortunate and indefensible attitude that defies and rejects the verdict of the people, then reconciliation between the victor and vanquished is impossible.”⁹⁰³

ZANU-PF came to power on a political reconciliation platform that was based on what one might call reconciliation through amnesia. The official version of this particular brand of reconciliation was based on the concepts of ‘closing the chapter’ of the Rhodesian past and starting afresh with a ‘clean slate’ or a blank page on which the new history of Zimbabwe would be recorded from 1980 onwards. While all this seemed noble and laudable, especially after the devastation of the liberation war, it was simply not possible, nor realistic. In retrospect, it has become evermore clear that the proverbial

⁹⁰² Bond, P. & Manyanya, M. 2002. *Zimbabwe’s Plunge: Exhausted Nationalism and the Search for Social Justice*. Durban: University of Natal Press.

⁹⁰³ Meredith, 2002: 60. Mugabe’s words in a speech delivered in June 1980, after reports that there were renegade bands of ex-combatants (both ZIPRA and ZANLA) that had not made their way to the demobilisation camps yet.

ghost of the Rhodesian colonial past and the internal violence of the Liberation struggle itself had come to haunt the Zimbabwean present.

*“That was just talk, it was just talk. There was no reconciliation plan. It was not there. I’m sure even when there was celebration in 1980, I’m sure it didn’t happen in Matabeleland...people must have been mourning, people must have been mourning because...those who participated in the bush war will tell you ‘okay, they did notice some traits in Robert Mugabe then’. You know, because the way some people just died, you know, they just became suspicious. Unfortunately a lot of them were silenced...and those who knew [but kept quiet] were rewarded.”*⁹⁰⁴

*“In terms of reconciliation or unity as far as I’m concerned, it is not. They cannot even talk about it ... I think we cannot even go to reconciliation, you know. I’ll come back to that but while I still remember this, they [ZANU-PF] refused for Ndebeles to talk about Gukurahundi, but they show us clips of what the Smith soldiers used to do, on TV. And they’re telling us ‘we mustn’t talk about what happened to us now because we’re opening old wounds’, but they’re taking images that happened some 30, 40 years ago, and graphic images for that matter; dead people being pulled by White soldiers and that kind of thing. All we’re saying is that we want to talk about what happened to us. We don’t want to go and pile the bones of the people that you killed, you know. You refuse us an opportunity to talk openly about it, to ourselves. We would talk to families that, even among themselves, they have never talked about it. You know...recently, we took two families In this community what they [Fifth Brigade] did was, they took people from one community and went and killed them in another community, [in] 1987. Those relatives were seeing those graves for the first time [in 2007]; they’ve never seen those graves.”*⁹⁰⁵

The necessary truth-telling and healing processes around the Matabeleland violence have not been truly comprehended or fully allowed to surface in the public discourse in Zimbabwe to date. While this debate did flourish at the release of the CCJP/LRF Report, and the ensuing dialogue through the private cyber-space of Zimnet in the 1990s, the government of the day has yet to engage in this dialogue directly with the communities of Matabeleland. When confronted with the evidence of violent atrocities in the early 1980s, the government has continually responded with denial and justifications. Massacres were brought to light with the uncovering of the mass graves at

⁹⁰⁴ Interview: DL1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 11/08/06 - (Ndebele Journalist employed as a business editor for a prominent newspaper).

⁹⁰⁵ Interview: DN3, Johannesburg, South Africa – 30/10/07 – (Ndebele NGO peace worker facilitating trauma healing and reconciliation among rural Matabeleland communities and survivors of Gukurahundi violence).

the location of Mpindo exposed by torrential rains, and the discovery of mine shafts filled with human remains at Antelope and Silobela (Old Hat Mine # 2) which were standing in disuse.

“Bodies of guerrillas are known to have been thrown down mine shafts in the 1970s by the Rhodesian army and the first response of the government to finds in the 1990s was that these were Rhodesian victims. However, post-independence minted coins found in the pockets of the deceased, dated the remains in Antelope Mine to the 1980s.”⁹⁰⁶

Sources indicated that when these mass killings were publicized, local police and Central Intelligence Officers (CIO’s) were sent to guard these sites under investigation. Local people were threatened if they came forward with information, visitors were refused on site and there is strong reason to believe that evidence was tampered with.⁹⁰⁷

“Interviews on record, both archivally and recently, refer to nightly departures of trucks from Bhalagwe [location of Antelope Mine], taking away bodies, Accounts by villagers living near the mine confirm that was the destination.”⁹⁰⁸

The below interview respondent narrates a traumatic script, a common occurrence where ZANU-PF government construction or utility workers stumbled across shallow graves of victims of Gukurahundi violence in Matabeleland:

“And tragically in one instance the electrical power company actually dug one of the graves when they were putting up the pole, and we’re saying they’re never conf[irm]...To make matters worse, they were Shona employees of this power company. So if ... to people, ‘you came and you killed us, and now you are desecrating our graves’ there’s no respect. Why couldn’t they have asked? And when they discovered that there were bones there, all they did was to shift...I’m not going to talk about metres but centimetres from where the graves are, literally centimetres. *And, you know, people feel disrespected, you feel like you don’t count in the grand plan of ZANU-PF. So all these things...there’s too many reminders, so we cannot even talk about reconciliation because there is no conducive atmosphere of reconciliation. We actually need to begin to talk about the stories.*”⁹⁰⁹

Speaking of the traumatic fear that still remains in Matabeleland, this interview transcript links that ever present fear with the inability to discover or experience true reconciliation:

⁹⁰⁶ CCJP/LRF, 1997: 203.

⁹⁰⁷ Alexander, et al, 2000: 257.

⁹⁰⁸ CCJP/LRF, 1997: 203.

⁹⁰⁹ Interview: DN3, Johannesburg, South Africa – 30/10/07 – (Ndebele NGO peace worker facilitating trauma healing and reconciliation among rural Matabeleland communities and survivors of Gukurahundi violence).

*“This is why some of us will argue that ‘there has never been unity’, it is not there. People still have this fear, understandably so. Gukurahundi was not a joke; it was brutal in its form. And so people [were] brutalized...even now, it’s a strategy that they used...somebody walks in here and say[s] ‘I’m from the President’s Office’ ; that is meant to give you peace of mind. ‘Ah, welcome gentlemen from the President’s Office’. In Matabeleland it is not like that. Somebody says ‘from the President’s Office’...[you] disappear, because a lot of people disappeared. Some of them I knew. One or two in Silobela disappeared up to now. *Traces unknown and you think you can talk peace, and you think you can talk unity under those [circumstances]. There has never been any move to reconcile; none at all.* All that we read is ‘a moment of madness’. ‘Madness’ (?) You can’t end there. So I think the challenges lie ahead. This nation...in fact for now, there is no nation. As far as I’m concerned there is no nation, there are several nations sharing common borders.”⁹¹⁰*

In sum, any inference to the Unity Accord heralding reconciliation in Matabeleland has been aggravated. It has been punctuated by the stark and shocking discovery of unidentified human remains scattered across the region in shallow graves, and it has been left mute in face of the continual censorship of the Matabele victims’ stories of pain and trauma. These harrowing tales reside in the bodies of Matabeleland survivors as permanent reminders of the horrific violence of Gukurahundi in the early 1980s.

8.4.2. ‘Forced to Resort to the Same Measures Again’

Another measure of the validity of the Unity Accord is the on-going official ZANU-PF narrative discourse that transpired after its ratification. Once again, ZANU-PF failed to convince the Matabeleland public of its bona fide interest in unification. In a public address made in 1993 as part of his ‘Meet the People’ national road show, Robert Mugabe categorically stated his response to the Fifth Brigade atrocities in Matabeleland: “I won’t apologise. This is what happens in a war.”⁹¹¹ In October of 1999, the *Financial Gazette* published an article written by ZANU-PF stalwart Nathan Shamuyarira declaring that the Matabeleland violence of the early 1980s was “handled the only way possible.” In a rebuttal article entitled, ‘Shamuyarira explodes myth of 1987 Unity Accord’, Judith Garfield Todd had this to say:

⁹¹⁰ Interview: PN1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 30/03/07 – (Ndebele historian, author, researcher and archivist).

⁹¹¹ ‘Tell me Another One’, (1993) *Horizon* (Harare) January, 11.

“I wrote that by stating that the 1980s disturbances had been ‘handled the only way possible’, Shamuyarira had dashed my hope that those complicit in state violence unleashed since 1980 were repentant. In his words: ‘If such a situation were to arise in any part of the country today, the government may be forced to resort to the same measures again as soon as it feels that law and order are being threatened.’”⁹¹²

These official statements by senior ZANU-PF politicians sent at least two highly troubling messages to the Zimbabwe public in general and the Matabeleland region specifically. First, Mugabe’s defiant refusal to apologise magnified the violence worldview of ZANU-PF and only served to confirm the lack of change in the entrenched, forceful mind-set that still prevailed in government circles. Second, the printed comments by Shamuyarira inferring that ZANU-PF would not do anything differently in Matabeleland insinuated that there had been no dismantling of the violence system or the structural components that support it. Therefore, if the ZANU-PF government expressed willingness to use the same level of state-sanctioned violent force twelve years (1999) after the signing of the Unity Accord (1987), it would serve to correlate that the ZANU-PF conception of ‘unity’ was still heavily defined by *uniformity* and not a respectful diversification of political thought and power.

8.4.3. Remorse Denied

In May of 1997, before its official publication, ‘Breaking the Silence’ - the most comprehensive report on the Matabeleland massacres prepared by the Catholic Commission on Justice and Peace (CCJP) and the Legal Resources Foundation (LRF) - was leaked to the press. This leakage opened up a furore of political debate across the country regarding the Matabeleland violence. *The Chronicle* of Bulawayo portrayed the report and the issues of debate as follows:

“Shedding light into this otherwise buried part of Zimbabwe’s post independence history, the detailed 200-page atrocities report...says Government forces caused great pain and suffering as they swept through the villages. Thousands of innocent people are said to have been killed or abducted as it seemed they were being punished for harbouring dissidents.”⁹¹³

⁹¹² Todd, 2007: 405.

⁹¹³ ‘Apology is all the people of Matabeleland want to hear’ (1998) *The Chronicle* (Bulawayo) 14 September.

Concerned about the political ramifications of the early release of this document, the CCJP withdrew its plans to print the report. However, the LRF resolved not to let this media break hamper its plans to go public and mandated the publishing of the report in that same year.

“...it was ‘done’ by the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace but it was put out by the Legal Resources Centre. The Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace was too afraid to publicly challenge Mugabe by putting that out. And so they sat on that report for a couple of years and it was the Legal Resources Centre that finally said ‘no, no, we were the partners in this and this is our reporting too and we’re putting it out. And you may be too frightened to do that but we’re going to put it out’. I think then the Catholic Church has become more outspoken in its criticism of the Mugabe government but the Catholic bishops were afraid. They knew Mugabe, they knew that ‘any thing’ from what [they were] saying would be completely rejected and be a kind of announcement of oppression or antagonism between them, so it was the Legal Resources Centre that had to do that.”⁹¹⁴

When a copy of the CCJP/LRF Report was put into the hands of President Robert Mugabe, he offered this cautious and rather ambiguous public response:

“If we dig up past history, we wreck the survival of the nation and can tear our people apart into tribes and villagism will prevail...History should be a register that will remain as what never to do. If that was wrong and went against the sacred tenets of humanity we must never repeat [it], we must never oppress man.”⁹¹⁵

While ZANU-PF claimed this as their certified ‘apology’, many others in Matabeleland and beyond questioned the legitimacy of this statement and its content consistency; some saying it was an apology and others saying, an excuse. Nonetheless, this utterance was both obscure and nebulous, no matter the angle from which one might choose to approach the analysis of this discourse. This distraction was probably exactly what the ZANU-PF desired from this communication; a *debatable confusion*. Always the one to avoid being caught out or tacked down, this expression gave ZANU-PF just enough emotive sentiment to appease the critics, but not too much to lose the trust of the loyalists. What is abundantly clear is that this scripted, executive ‘apology’ was highly *conditional*. The operative word throughout this text was ‘if’. For the wrong-doer, to start

⁹¹⁴ Interview: AM1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 10/08/06 – (White American Journalist who lived in Zimbabwe from 1980 until he was deported by the ZANU-PF government).

⁹¹⁵ ‘5 Brigade atrocities a mistake’ (1997) *The Chronicle (Bulawayo)* 11 May.

an apology (even with good intentions) with the phrase, 'if that was wrong' is to effectively negate the suffering of the victim. This state-sanctioned apology was emotionally received by the victimised masses as their powerful oppressor rationalising his wrong-doing. All hints at a sincere apology at a national or individual level hung on, or were lost in, that small but extremely potent word '*if*'. Accentuating the importance of public political apology, journalist Benedicta Madawo penned these words:

“APOLOGY, a small word yet replete with meaning. To a true lover or committed Christian it may come easily, but to the people of Matabeleland it is a big word they would very much want to hear from the lips of Government.”⁹¹⁶

Not only did Mugabe refuse to offer an apology, but almost in the same breath he railed on those responsible for the production of the report calling on his fellow Zimbabweans to be “*wary of detractors of unity, who disguised themselves in religious garb.*”⁹¹⁷ This demonstrates a classic discourse from the violence system when it feels itself to be under threat. First, this formulation assumes that it is not possible or desirable to revisit the past as it purportedly destroys the bonds of unity. The violence system has much too lose if the atrocities of past violence can be identified, interrogated and integrated into the healing of a people group or nation. Thus, the violence system will necessarily employ a fear tactic that lays claim to the premise that *resolving the pain of the past* and *true unity in the present* are mutually exclusive phenomena. The ZANU-PF violence system had no place for the co-habitation of the ideas that the people of Matabeleland could have recovered from their past hurts and yet still dwelt in unity with the rest of Zimbabwe in ‘real-time’ understanding.

Second, the violence system often insinuates that anyone (more specifically peace practitioners and advocates) who question or act against the prevailing violence *status quo* are considered to be *trouble-makers*. Those who promote structural change away from oppression and toward justice are accused of being ‘rabble-rousers’. The violence system, as with all structures of power, is configured for self-protection. Bearing this in mind, when the acclamation of peace and unity for the future requires dismantling the violence in the ‘now’, the violence system assumes a posture of hyper-preservation.

⁹¹⁶ ‘Apology is all the people of Matabeleland want to hear’ (1998) *The Chronicle (Bulawayo)* 14 September.

⁹¹⁷ ‘5 Brigade atrocities a mistake’ (1997) *The Chronicle (Bulawayo)* 11 May.

The ZANU-PF's attempt to publicly discredit and undermine the image and legitimacy of those advocating for positive peace in Zimbabwe was a blatant outgrowth of its desperate need to try to remain impenetrable.

Mugabe's defence of the Matabeleland violence became increasingly shrill and paradoxical the more he spoke and with ironic flare he proceeded to hold himself up as champion of reconciliation:

"Giving himself as an example of true reconciliation and forgiveness, he said people should not go by happenings of the past. 'If we go by the past, what cause would compel us to keep Ian Smith (former Rhodesian prime Minister). Perhaps I would be the first to cut his throat.' He said."⁹¹⁸

More precisely, Mugabe is quoted to have expounded this startling line of vengeance in even more detail as recorded in another Zimbabwean newspaper published on the same date:

"If we go by the past, would Ian Smith be alive today? What will there be to impel us to keep him alive? Perhaps I will be the first man to go and cut his throat and open up his belly but no we shall never do that."⁹¹⁹

Despite the attached moral disclaimer at the end of this diatribe, one cannot help but associate these words as descriptive detail for the actual violence carried out by the Fifth Brigade on the Matabeleland civilian population in the early 1980s. The most profound message from this official verbiage is two-fold. In the first place, through his words, Mugabe elevated *violent revenge* as not only permissible but apparently a quite justifiable and valid human response. With this precedence established, Mugabe furthers an ironic twist of logic that seems to suggest that while violent revenge would serve a *noble cause*, it is out of the magnanimous benevolence of his personhood that he has decided to transcend this defensible urge and walk on a higher plane of existence. In the second place, in this short but toxic tirade, it becomes patently understood that the ZANU-PF views itself as possessing the moral mandate and the political power *alone* to exact this form of violent revenge on whomsoever it wills. This kind of declaration on its own leaves little room for expressions of remorse to emerge.

⁹¹⁸ Ibid.

⁹¹⁹ 'Beware of mischief makers – President' (1997) *Sunday Mail (Harare)* 11 May.

The official government response to the report on the Matabeleland atrocities left a sting of discouragement on the Matabeleland region. However, the public release of the report in and of itself was an exceptionally empowering happening for those victims and survivors who had been privately carrying their traumatic pain for so many years. Although their suffering was not fully recognised by the government authorities, it was now a documented, undeniable reality that needed to be grappled with by the majority of Zimbabweans both Shona and Ndebele alike.

“Despite the hostile government response, these reports played an important role within Matabeleland for the public confirmation for the first time of the existence of government atrocities, and their sparking of a public debate about the need for acknowledgement and healing.”⁹²⁰

The human dignity that is transmitted in this universal acknowledgement of suffering is often hard to measure in concrete terms. Thus, the release of this report, while only a first step, nonetheless must be considered a *milestone* in the long journey of recognition and healing for the people of Matabeleland.

8.4.4. Responsibility Deferred

The ZANU-PF has consistently minimised its role and *responsibility* for the perpetration of violence in Matabeleland. Particularly noteworthy is the continual utilisation of the word *disturbances* to describe the Gukurahundi period of violence. In the Special 25th Anniversary edition of the state-controlled newspaper, *The Chronicle*, the only mention of the Matabeleland violence came in the form of one sentence under the biographical account honouring Dr. Joshua Nkomo’s life. It reads as follows: “*There was mistrust between ZAPU and ZANU, leading to disturbances in the 1980’s.*”⁹²¹ Make no mistake the ZANU-PF was strategic in its utilisation of this particular phraseology.

The discourse surrounding a concept like disturbances has far-reaching political connotations; all the dictionary meanings given to this word infer an intrusion into the accepted status quo by external agents of sabotage, which fit well into the dissident meta-narrative of the ZANU-PF.⁹²² As commonly used in everyday life, the word disturbance

⁹²⁰ Alexander, et al, 2000: 257.

⁹²¹ ‘Profiles of Zimbabwean Luminaries’ (2005) *The Chronicle (Bulawayo)* 18 April.

⁹²² Davies, P. (ed.) 1976. *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*. New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 210. The word disturb is defined as: 1.) To upset the tranquillity or settled state of, 2.) To intrude upon; interrupt, and 3.) To disarrange.

infers at least three implicit, if not explicit meanings. First, a disturbance often refers to a happening that has had a *diminished affect*. It incurs the notion of annoyance, a minor irritation or slight disruption in a normal routine. One might comment on a pestering fly or a mosquito as a disturbance while eating or sleeping. Thus, by using this word the ZANU-PF *denied the extremity of its violence* and denied the satisfaction of the Matabeleland citizenry an opportunity to exploit the evocative meanings of verbiage like massacres, killings and atrocities. Second, a ‘disturbance’ also speaks to an *abbreviated time-frame*. A disturbance is usually understood to come and go rapidly; a short interval of distraction. It may arrive unexpectedly and leave just as quickly as it came. In this way, by using this word the ZANU-PF was able to give the impression that the Matabeleland intervention was *short-lived* and by implication not as severe as may have been suggested. Third and finally, a ‘disturbance’ elicits the notion of *neutralised responsibility*. Disturbances are often expressive of natural phenomena whose origins are blurred or hazy in interpretation and an occurrence that is detached from any structural grounding. Hence, the placement of fault or guilt in the causation of a disturbance is not easily isolated. In this definition and use of the word, the ZANU-PF inadvertently *exonerates* itself from being held accountable as an agent of perpetration in the Gukurahundi violence. Even out of deference to the ruling party, and in order to stay as politically impartial as possible the CCJP / LRF decided to designate the word ‘disturbances’ in their title for the report on the Matabeleland conflict.

Being denied an apology, the people of Matabeleland seized on the public release of the CCJP / LRF Report, and pursued all avenues of compensation at their disposal as a way to hold the government accountable for the violence that had been enacted in the region. This advocacy campaign for material and symbolic restitution initially confronted a blanket refusal for consideration from the government: “*Notwithstanding President Mugabe ruled out the possibility to either compensate or apologise to the victims...*”⁹²³ Eventually one year later these advocacy efforts paid off by prompting a verbal assent by the ZANU-PF to assist the victims of the Gukurahundi. In October of 1999, ZANU-PF made a public commitment to compensate Matabeleland victims of violence:

⁹²³ ‘Apology is all the people of Matabeleland want to hear’ (1998) *The Chronicle (Bulawayo)* 14 September.

“The Government will soon compile a list of people affected by post-independence disturbances in Matabeleland and the Midlands and explore ways of compensating them, President Mugabe said yesterday... ‘We should never let a conflict situation occur in the future. What happened was regrettable and caused a lot of suffering, some of which still persists today’, he said. Cde Mugabe said people out to promote disunity made it appear as if the Government was not aware of the need to help those affected by the atrocities... The Government would not discriminate against any ethnic group in the country, the President said. ‘We have learnt a lot from our history and from our liberation struggle and will leave no room for tribalism in Zimbabwe. People should be free to work or live wherever they want to without being discriminated against along tribal lines.’ He added.”⁹²⁴

Unfortunately, nothing ever materialised from these empty promises. Despite the obvious effort on the part of ZANU-PF to show-case a reconciliatory tone and to reassure the Matabeleland region of its sympathy and compassion, it was an exercise in ‘lip-service’ alone. In July of 2000, a short (4 paragraph) article was tucked away in *The Sunday Chronicle* of Bulawayo:

“A COMMITTEE tasked by President Mugabe to look into the compensation of the victims of post independence disturbances in Matabeleland will be dissolved next weekend because it has not received financial support from the Government to do its work, a committee member said yesterday... Cde Mugabe described the political disturbances which occurred in Matabeleland and Midlands between 1982 and 1987 as an ‘act of madness’ which should not have happened. He said the committee was working to ensure that the victims were compensated.”⁹²⁵

In September 2000 an opposition member of parliament, Tafadzwa Musekiwa proposed a truth and reconciliation committee be set up to investigate the Matabeleland massacres:

“He [Musekiwa] said a parliamentary select committee should be appointed to investigate the perpetrators of violence, causes of the disturbances, the role of the army, the police, the Central Intelligence Organisation and the ZANU-PF youth brigades. The committee, he said, would make recommendations on the issue of damages and compensation to victims, the prosecution of the perpetrators and on measures to stop a reoccurrence of similar violence. He said the committee would also look at the need to erect monuments at mass graves similar to those at Chimoio and Tembwe in Mozambique, and on the engagement of teams of counsellors, psychologists and health practitioners to assist victims.”⁹²⁶

⁹²⁴ ‘Atrocities victims to be compensated’ (1999) *The Chronicle (Bulawayo)* 18 October.

⁹²⁵ ‘Compensation committee to dissolve’ (2000) *The Chronicle (Bulawayo)* 09 July.

⁹²⁶ ‘MP calls for probe into disturbances’ (2000) *The Chronicle (Bulawayo)* 22 September.

To date, this too seems to have fallen on deaf ears. There has been no follow-up or implementation of this proposal, and it has not been tabled in Parliament since, although the demands for a truth and reconciliation commission continue to grow in the wake of the current government of national unity formed in Zimbabwe in 2008.

With the ZANU-PF government denying an apology and deferring responsibility, the people of Matabeleland have observed another decade pass without feeling a sense of healing closure or experiencing the relief of even a moderate reparations package. In hindsight, this gives explanation as to why there was such a sceptical response by the Matabeleland region to the signing of the Unity Accord and the ZANU-PF overtures of reconciliation that it was enshrined in; after all, they were hollow in content and intent.

8.5. Conclusion: Uniformity Masquerading as Unity

“Whether opening [old wounds] constituted a destructive or healing act, were subjects of contention which begged a range of questions regarding the proper commemoration of the dead and the appropriate ways in which history might be invoked in the present without ‘tearing the nation apart’.”⁹²⁷

This chapter has wrestled with the inter-play between narratives of *uniformity* and narratives of *diversity* and the hold that each of them claim over the conceptualisation and the actualisation of national political unity. Coming out of seven years of severe violence in Matabeleland, the introductory section unfurls the back-drop of *exhaustion* that both ZAPU and ZANU-PF (albeit for different reasons) came to the signing of the Unity Accord in 1987. The second section outlines the ZANU-PF narrative version of the Unity Accord which was in essence considered a *triumphant piece of diplomacy*. However, other narratives question this line of reasoning on four fronts: it appeared to be more about a military than a political solution, the blanket amnesty compromised justice, it benefited top leaders and not the masses, and it was primarily owned by the politicians and not the most affected people of Matabeleland.

In contrasting script, section three explored the ZAPU-manufactured narrative discourse on the Unity Accord which perceived it to be at best a *compromised ceasefire* enforced by the brutality of violence that had already been unleashed on Matabeleland for years. This argument was built on the silencing of Nkomo as the ZAPU spokesperson, the

⁹²⁷ Alexander, et al, 2000: 259.

humiliation of forced uniformity, and what many termed as ZAPU being ‘*swallowed-up*’ by ZANU-PF. The metaphor of being ‘swallowed-up’ meant the loss of at least four pivotal aspects of political power and influence for ZAPU: lack of representation, lack of an engaging role, lack of meaningful symbols, and continued lack of access to development. In the final section, the research suggests that the Unity Accord was a *defining moment* in the history of Zimbabwe primarily because it ensured the complete public imposition of the ZANU-PF meta-narrative over the nation and the complete public subjugation of the counter narratives of resistance in Matabeleland. This seemingly hopeless fate was reinforced by an unrecognisable reconciliation and the ZANU-PF continuing to verbalise a position of no regrets about the Matabeleland intervention. To exacerbate this situation even further, the ZANU-PF denied Matabeleland a remorseful apology and failed to take responsibility to provide compensation to Matabeleland victims of violence, despite official promises to the contrary. This defining moment only lasted for about a decade until the release of a comprehensive report detailing the extent of the ZANU-PF violence in Matabeleland whereby a national debate was opened up again. However, the desire for healing and reparations remains an illusive dream for Matabeleland even up to the present.

In sum, the elusive notion of unity finds its vigour in providing the boundaries for a set of fully expressed diversities without becoming imbalanced itself. This unity in diversity is maintained through respectful mutuality and complimentary interconnectivity. The ZANU-PF was unable to, or chose not to appreciate this dialogue of unity through diversity. Hence, the monologue of *uniformity* continued to try to quell and subsume every counter narrative in Zimbabwe even after the signing of the Unity Accord. The below interview respondent (an ex-ZIPRA combatant) illustrated this all encompassing uniformity with simplicity:

“A so-called Unity...I can explain the question. If I take this water red, I take that water blue, we mix together, what colour comes? It’s a different colour. But after [unity] it’s still ZANU-PF ‘black’, still ZANU-PF slogans, ZANU-PF principles. Is that unity? *If you make a unity, Mr. Man; you change things completely, I change my thing, you change your thing; we have a new thing in front of us that’s called ‘unity’.* This is black, this is white, we mix; we have a different colour. Second to this Unity; *if you talk about unity, you talk about equality, 50-50.* But now, if I can tell you that in ZAPU who is a [government] Minister, it’s only [Kembo] Mohadi as a Minister of Home Affairs only. Then there are ‘deputies’. I

think if you can understand the meaning of ‘deputy’, then you can have it very clear; that’s our problem.”⁹²⁸

In a straightforward manner, the above transcription lays out two critical component parts of authentic political unity: first, genuine unity will have a combined, yet essentially different identity than either or any of the particular identities of the individuals or organisations that make up the different elements of that unity agreement. Second, valid unity agreements will spell out socio-political and structural contracts that delineate equitable power-sharing arrangements for the future. There will be equal access to positions of power and influence in government. These power-sharing contracts, while given lip service and token consideration by ZANU-PF were not seriously or carefully entrenched in the Zimbabwean Unity Accord of 1987. ZANU-PF maintained its identity of dominance and equality was missing in the incorporation of ZAPU leaders into the government structures.

The clamour for recognition coming from the subjugated voices of Matabeleland is a cry that is increasing in volume and intensity. These protests cannot forever be ignored. In Zimbabwe, Unity Day (December 22) is a national commemoration of the signing of the Unity Accord in 1987. In 2002, Max Mnkandla, information secretary of the Zimbabwe Liberators’ Peace Platform (ZLPP) announced that Unity Day should be kept as a day of mourning. He called on all Zimbabweans to:

“...not to be fooled into celebrating an accord which legitimated the slaughter of kith and kin. Instead of expensive celebrations an ‘upright government’ should spend money on exhumations and reburials. History itself needs to be exhumed. On December 22 we shall be in our black robes remembering those who perished and lie in mass graves.”⁹²⁹

In contrast, commenting on this commemoration in that same year, President Mugabe re-confirmed that the ZANU-PF’s historical monologue was still alive by declaring that: *“Whatever remains were historical differences. These remain as history of our country and we can’t bring ugly history into the present affairs and rewrite that ugly history.*

⁹²⁸ Interview: AN2, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 12/09/07 – (Ndebele Ex-ZIPRA Soldier).

⁹²⁹ ‘A Time of National Mourning’ (2002) *The Standard* (Harare) 24 December. It should be noted that some sources have accused the ZLPP of being a false, front organisation sponsored by the State CIO as a counter to the ZLP (Zimbabwe Liberators’ Platform). However, these claims have not been substantiated.

No.”⁹³⁰ In retrospect, Mugabe’s narrative discourse above was miscalculated; one *can* bring ugly history into the present affairs and one *can* rewrite it. According to journalist Tracey McVeigh, Liberation War veteran Gibson Nyandoro and many other ordinary citizens just like him across the nation of Zimbabwe are doing exactly this on a daily basis:

“So when, five days ago, [Gibson] Nyandoro, [a war veteran] 58, rattled his bike into the centre of the opposition rally – he said, he thought his heart would stop in fear – and told the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) candidate and her supporters that a group of his comrades had sent him to ask if they would be welcome to join, it was an unprecedented act. It was time for a change, he said, to great cheers. ‘We don’t want this power-hungry dictator any more. We have lost our dignity through this ruling party and have nothing in return.’”⁹³¹

In no uncertain terms, the unity masquerade of the ZANU-PF is beginning to crumble; tearing at the seams as narratives of diversity push their way to the surface removing the cloak of uniformity that was covering the nation after the signing of the 1987 Unity Accord.

⁹³⁰ Ranger, T. 2003. “Nationalist Historiography, Patriotic History and the History of the Nation: the struggle over the past in Zimbabwe”. *Journal for Southern African Studies* 30 (2), 29.

⁹³¹ ‘How Mugabe faithful became the opposition’ (2008) *The Observer* 23 March.

Chapter 9: Conclusion- Emancipatory Narratives and the Search for Durable Peace

9.1. Summary of Thesis Findings and Conclusions

- **Overall Question: How did narrative discourse mould the violence in Matabeleland, Zimbabwe between the years of 1980-1987, and how has / has not this violence discourse influenced the socio-political crisis being experienced in Matabeleland today?**

In a decisive departure from the dominant ‘structural-functionalist’ analysis of political conflict, this thesis employed a social constructivist approach which interrogated the Matabeleland conflict of 1980-1987 through the intersection of the violence narrative and the production of ‘preferred realities.’ Of critical relevance to this study was the interplay between the violence meta-narrative manufactured by the ZANU-PF government and imposed on the people of Zimbabwe and the myriad of contrasting, yet subjugated counter-narratives that were formulated as alternative resistances. Through a comprehensive literature review (**Chapter 2**), and purposive in-depth interview sample and document analysis methodologies (**Chapter 3**), this study deconstructed the generative nature of scripted conflict in Matabeleland through the exploration of the language of violence, spontaneous performance of violence, and the social conflict phenomena of stage-managed dramaturgical applications of violence as the means to accomplishing political power ends.

Over the duration of the Matabeleland conflict, the dominant meta-narrative of the ZANU-PF was characterised by themes of victor, order, exclusion, discipline and uniformity. In response, the Matabeleland people nurtured a set of sublimated narratives of insurgency pulsating with stories of vanquish, disorder, inclusion, protest and diversity. While the exertion and protection of violent power represented the centrifugal, motivational pull of the ZANU-PF government narrative, the subjugated narratives of Matabeleland continued to rise up in order to complicate and detract from the neatly packaged ZANU-PF grand-narrative. The coupling together of these divergent narratives of victor-vanquished, order-disorder, exclusion-inclusion, discipline-protest, and uniformity-diversity resulted in the ‘thickening of the narrative plot’ of the Matabeleland violence. By nature, these narratives repulsed each other, yet a traumatic bonding developed between these binary narrative texts; a lethal attraction was birthed and a fatal dance of brinkmanship was released between the ZANU-PF government and all who

dared to speak an alternative story of reality. This narrative competition spawned a discourse of threatening terror, state-sanctioned structures of violence, and mob-induced moments of torture and intimidation eventually culminating in the unity agreement of 1987, which was paraded as a public peace, yet privately masked a plethora of silenced narratives of insurrection.

- **Specific Aim One: What are the salient themes (component parts) of the Meta-narrative constructed by the ZANU-PF in order to explain and justify the violence that occurred in Matabeleland over this time frame?**
- **Specific Aim Two: What were the counter-narratives that emerged during this time and how were they subjugated and silenced by the ruling ZANU-PF?**

This thesis examined the following five salient thematic trajectories of the ZANU-PF grand-narrative and the Matabeleland counter-narratives that emerged in the course of the research: Ethnicity, Nationalism, Loyalty, Legitimacy and Unity. The specific aims one and two above have been placed together as they represent two sides of a mirror. The ZANU-PF meta-narratives and the alternative narratives that surfaced in Matabeleland between the years 1980-1987 are deeply intertwined; merged in a dialogical narrative discourse. Thus, for purposes of this analysis section summary on the thesis findings and conclusions, the dominant ZANU-PF meta-narrative and the corresponding subjugated narratives from Matabeleland will not be presented separately; they will be laced together into one narrative conversation.

Chapter 4 of this Thesis argued against the ethnic-essentialist script of ancient animosities, by tracing the formative origins of the historical narrative of '*victor and vanquished*' as embraced and rejected in both the Ndebele and Shona identity stories from as far back as the 1800s. This study traced the ethnic identity narratives of the Matabele and Mashona through three eras of time: pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial. In each of these epochs the Ndebele and the Shona identities took on the roles of the *offended* and the *justified offender*. Narratives of superiority and inferiority were manipulated by the colonial powers and the writers of history. The perceived ethnic-based conflict was solidified after independence when the ruling ZANU-PF government (supposedly representing the Shona majority) embarked on a lethal strategy combining the use of ethnic-hate language and severe, protracted violence unleashed on the civilian

population of Matabeleland (representing the Ndebele minority). The following five theorems of ethnic identity formation surfaced in this research on the Matabeleland conflict and would suggest that ethnic hostilities are not innate, but shaped by context and social-political impetus:

- Ethnic identity is not static, it is often in flux
- Ethnic identity is pluralistic, not monolithic
- Ethnic identity is often manipulated by historical conflict memory and political opportunism
- Ethnic conflict identity is often formed around the psychology of victor (chosen glories) and vanquished (chosen traumas)
- Overemphasis of one facet of our identity can exacerbate conflict

With the entrenchment of the ethnic-conflict, **Chapter 5** explores how the ZANU-PF regime embarked on a nationalist project buttressed by a set of ‘*ordering*’ narratives. Finding itself on the tail-end of the post-independence, African nation-state experiment, the ZANU-PF struggled to manage the nationalist discourse from revolution to rule. Moving from the tidy rhetoric of revolution, to the untidy text of negotiated peace settlements and the multiplicity of post-independence narratives, the ZANU-PF needed to manufacture a *regulatory memory* and a *normative experience* for the nation. To regulate and manipulate the affections of the nation, ZANU-PF built their national narrative around the emphasis and expression of a powerful centralised government, a one-party state, and revolutionary leader veneration.

To manufacture a normative experience for the nation, the ZANU-PF produced the platforms on which to stage-manage violent performances of ‘*disordering*’ proportions and thereby reinforce their imposed order on the nation. The violent clashes between ex-ZANLA and ex-ZIPRA demobilisation camps at Entumbane (Bulawayo) functioned as Act One of this disordering play. The ‘discovery’ of arms caches on ZAPU-owned farms became Act Two and the abduction and murder of six international tourists served as Act Three. Each of these dramaturgical Acts represented highly contested terrains. The ZANU-PF government used the official interpretation of these events to discredit the ZAPU opposition as ‘poor losers’, counter-revolutionary, and a threat to the safety of the international community, and they seized upon each of these events and the resultant chaotic violence, to further justify their nationalist agenda; the enforcement of an ordering script of ultimate control. However, surrounding each of

these performances, narratives emerged that suggested deceitful schemes of government compliance (stage-managed violence) and each of these Acts were appropriated by the Matabeleland opposition as proof that the ZANU-PF-dictated nationalist ‘ordering’ script had failed.

In order to maintain its nationalist vision, **Chapter 6** of this thesis investigated the narratives of *loyalty* demanded by ZANU-PF. Capitalising on the scripts of *exclusion* and *inclusion*, the ZANU-PF gave particular attention to the binary labels of *hero* and *dissident*. The ZANU-PF government launched an outright attack (of narrative discourse and accompanying physical violence) on the opposition in Matabeleland which was aimed at erasing ZAPU-ZIPRA from the historical record and eventually attempting to obliterate them from the national memory. This narrative discourse struggle embodied the life and death contestation of patriotic memory and the revolutionary recognition that qualified a warrior’s honour or a traitor’s shame.

The loyalty narrative of the ZANU-PF was based on contrasting and contrived narratives of enemy-invention (in this case the ‘dissidents’). These ZANU-PF narratives of disloyalty functioned to accomplish two critical goals; to dehumanise and question the national ‘belonging’ of the Matabeleland opposition and by default the civilian population that supported them. The dehumanising scripts served to strip the opposition of identity, ideology, and history. The scripts of belonging touched on a deep, visceral nerve of ethno-national and cultural ‘rootedness’ as well as the need for political recognition. The determination of the existence (size and scope) of the dissidents in Matabeleland galvanised the moral imagination of the nation with the resultant outcome of three distinct narratives of explanation coming from three distinct levels of society; the ZANU-PF government inflated the numbers of dissidents as a threat to national security, the civil society actors in Matabeleland minimised the dissident threat describing the Matabeleland violence as an attempt to wipe-out the support base of the ZAPU opposition, and the mass populace on-the-ground denied the dissident threat and instead emphasised the violence as genocidal in proportion; an ethnic cleansing exercise by the Shona against the Ndebele.

As the unquestioning command for ZANU-PF loyalty begin to fade, *legitimacy* needed to be reinforced (**Chapter 7**). This the ZANU-PF regime accomplished by

embedding its legitimacy narratives in the *disciplinary* nature of the systematic violence and in the repudiation of the *protest* scripts against that violence coming from the recipient communities. In an attempt to fuse together the concept of legitimacy and violence the ZANU-PF government overemphasised their legitimacy as embedded in their *liberation credentials* and the *militarisation* of the state. Through intensive surveillance and infiltration measures, the ZANU-PF extended the *disciplinary function* of violence into multiple sectors of society in Matabeleland. This included a state-sanctioned control of historical indoctrination in schools, manipulation of political power, media restrictions, leadership domination in business and civil society affairs, and the constriction of material and infra-structural development flow to the region as a whole. This research identified six component parts that functioned to prop up the ZANU-PF violence system:

- Violence as Regenerative
- Violence as Sacred
- Violence as Hierarchical
- Violence as Competitive
- Violence as Motivational
- Violence as the Production and Performance of Narratives

In a show of well-orchestrated dramaturgical display, ZANU and ZAPU signed the Unity Accord of 1987 (**Chapter 8**), however for the people of Matabeleland the ZANU-PF narratives of *unity* resounded with hollow echoes of a ZANU-PF demand for *uniformity* dissolving the scant hope of a *power-sharing* arrangement that would respect the *diversity* of socio-political narratives that existed in Zimbabwe at that time. This study argues that the Unity Accord of 1987 represented an *exhausted unification*. ‘Exhausted’ in the sense that ZANU-PF had run out of ways to consolidate their meta-narrative of power and the ZAPU was completely defeated and undermined through the severe and protracted violence that was heavy over Matabeleland at that time. The ZANU-PF hailed the Unity Accord as a political *triumph in diplomacy*; a negotiated settlement that offered blanket amnesty for both sides, that provided for power-sharing arrangements for both ZANU-PF and ZAPU, and that secured peace and unity for the masses on the ground. For the Matabeleland opposition and their constituencies, the Unity Accord was at best a *compromised ceasefire* that resulted in the subsiding of killing. For many voices in

Matabeleland the Unity Accord was experienced as a defeat; the subjugation and silencing of ZAPU's leadership and ideological views. Using the metaphor of being '*swallowed-up*' the Matabeleland opposition experienced the Unity Accord as the humiliation of uniformity characterised by the lack of representation, lack of engaging role, lack of meaningful symbols and lack of access to development processes. This thesis suggests that the Unity Accord represented a defining moment in the solidification of the ZANU-PF meta-narrative. Not only was ZANU-PF successful in subsuming the oppositional narratives but, it successfully subsumed the oppositional structures as well.

- **Specific Aim Three: What are the inter-relational connections between the narrative discourse and the social construction of preferred realities, both of violence and peace in the Zimbabwe context?**

In an on-going effort to investigate the connection between narrative discourse and the social construction of reality, one of this thesis' aims was to interrogate the linkages between heightened narrative discourse on violence and the subsequent increase in performative violent action and/or the inverse. There was evidence that performative violent action increased the level of violence narratives (e.g. Lookout Masuku's death after being held in custody without trial for four years released a barrage of narrative condemnation, see Chapter 6: Section 6.5). Thus, it would appear that there is a symbiotic, didactic relationship between narrative and action with the sequencing of these events flowing in either direction (narrative then action, or action then narrative).

From this research there was evidence of at least three synapses whereby hyperbolic violence narratives seemed to have a 'cause and effect' on the levels of actual, direct violence being experienced in Matabeleland. The first involved the dissemination of biased patriotic history and ethnic-hatred language used by the Fifth Brigade soldiers. These narratives motivated the violent performance of the government security forces, and on the other hand increased the violent resolve of a handful of ex-ZIPRA dissidents, and a large number of the civilian population in their resistance against the homogenising meta-narrative of the ruling ZANU-PF party (Chapter 6: Section 6.2). Secondly, violence increased exponentially in connection to the violent rhetoric used by ZANU-PF political leaders in public speeches. One example of this was the Entumbane violence that erupted in Bulawayo between the two demobilised liberation armies after a particularly hateful

and inciting speech delivered by the fiery ZANU-PF government minister Enos Nkala (Chapter 5: Section 5.4.1.). Another illustration of this phenomenon was the ‘discovery’ of arms caches on ZAPU-owned farms which increased the violent language in regards to the Matabeleland dissidents and the eventual justification of the Fifth Brigade launch into the region (Chapter 5: Section 5.4.2.). Lastly, violence seemed to increase in and around critical political events that represented highly intensified arenas of political contestation such as the heightened direct and civilian-initiated violence before and after the 1985 elections (Chapter 7: Section 7.5.6.).

- **Specific Aim Four: What are the linkages (if any) between the processes of surfacing subjugated and silenced narratives in Matabeleland and finding a durable and sustainable peace in Zimbabwe for the future?**

In conclusion (**Chapter 9**), this thesis argues that there are linkages between the Matabeleland violence and the current political violence being unleashed on the opposition in Zimbabwe since the year 2000 (primarily experienced in Mashonaland). The commonalities between past and present violence in Zimbabwe have connections in a set of unusual circumstances. Namely, a joint narrative voice for survivors of violence is being discovered and expressed through a series of eclipsing narratives (at an international, national, and local levels), through layers of shared victimisation, and through the quest for a future vision in Zimbabwe. Out of these experiences, networks of *survivor solidarity* have begun to develop in Zimbabwe. These citizen movements of survivor-solidarity networks are being led by those who have walked a journey of trauma healing and who have had first-hand experience as victims of political violence that span multiple time periods in Zimbabwe. In this way, Matabeleland survivors of violence are uniquely placed to lead these survivor-solidarity campaigns as they find strength and unity in the envisioning and charting out of a future direction for a transformed Zimbabwe.

To this end, this chapter proposes a transitional justice model for Zimbabwe that is formulated around the guiding **values** of re-constructing a shared *memory*, re-establishing a sense of corporate *belonging and responsibility*, re-investing in public *participation* processes, and re-engaging in collective *healing*. Each of these values is related to corresponding guiding **principles** for transitional justice programmes in

Zimbabwe characterised as *victim-centred*, *responsibility-oriented*, *community-driven* and *compensation-based*. It is the premise of this thesis that durable peace in Zimbabwe will only be realised to the degree that the silenced victims of the Matabeleland massacres are given a public voice and sustained recognition in the collective memory of that nation.

9.2. Linking Past and Present Violence

*“The past is always before us.”*⁹³²

This ancient African proverb has a number of rich, textured meanings; it suggests that the past is somehow also located in the present and may even make a surprise visit in the future. In the first place this idiom is a splendid example of the *non-linear, cyclical thinking of the cosmology* of many traditional African cultures whereby the spiritual ties between the past, present and future remain alive and active in the 'now'. Secondly, this proverb carries a *cautionary meaning*; a warning to be aware of the past's unfinished business as it has a tendency to interrupt the present and unless it is resolved and healed it will continue to 'haunt' a person in the future. Thirdly, this proverb inhabits an *instructive meaning* which highlights the need to learn from our past; if one is reflective and open to change one need not have to repeat past mistakes. All of these meanings have bearing when applied in a *comparative* manner to the Matabeleland violence (1980-1987) and the most recent political violence sweeping Zimbabwe (2000-2008) with its eventual culmination in a government of national unity being formed between the ZANU-PF and the leading opposition party the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC).

In the Matabeleland case, this African wisdom-saying speaks to the ties between the historic violence of Gukurahundi and the current violence unleashed against opposition since the year 2000. While some scholarship may question the *direct linkage* between the past and present violence in Zimbabwe, this research indicates that there are powerful conceptual and narrative connections; each mirroring the other's form and repeating a cyclical, inter-generational violence with glaring resemblance⁹³³. Of obvious

⁹³² An African proverb, (Public Domain): The geographical origins of this particular wisdom-saying are uncertain.

⁹³³ Kriger, N. 2003. "War Veterans: Continuities Between the Past and the Present". *African Studies Quarterly* 7, no. 2&3: Retrieved from web 2007/11/07. URL: <http://web.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v7/v7i2a7.htm>: 1-12. In this article Kriger makes a cogent argument for the connections between the tactics of the ZANU-PF in partnership with the war veterans between the periods of 1980-7 and 2000-3. These tactics were

and pivotal significance in this equation is the congruent and consistent link represented in the ZANU-PF government itself as a party to each of these protracted conflicts and in many instances an instigating perpetrator of violence against the Zimbabwean citizenry in both time periods under question. Three other crucial ‘past-present’ inter-relational dynamics revolve around the phenomena of *eclipsing narratives*; interlocking scripts of geo-political recognition that are in a perpetual, textual competition one with each other at the global, national, and regional/local levels, the shared stories of violence and trauma emitting from the experiences of *multiple victims* both then and now, and the ZANU-PF government’s intractability in the past and their inability to envision and inspire a *future view* in the present. It is the premise of this thesis that all three of these processes must be considered, understood and mitigated against if viable, peaceful co-existence is to prevail in Zimbabwe. Hence, the next three sections of this chapter will expound on these topics, followed by an exploration of general recommendations deemed appropriate for a strategic peace-building intervention to be sustained in Zimbabwe, and a concluding section that summarises the findings of this thesis.

9.3. Eclipsing Narratives

“But then the world was saying, ‘We want to give the benefit of the doubt to the Black people for running their own affairs’. Come 2000, we are still being murdered. Exactly the same psyche that pervaded in Mugabe’s psyche when we won Independence is actually being perpetrated now on the Black people of Zimbabwe...What I am saying is: *Mugabe has always been killing people but, the world at some point, chooses to look [to] the other side ‘to see no evil, and hear no evil’.*”⁹³⁴

This study has given focused attention to the investigation of a phenomenon that is being referred to as ‘*eclipsing narratives*.’ This term speaks to the overlapping effect of competing narratives especially when it relates to the global/international narratives that tend to overshadow or subsume national narratives, which in turn close down the expressive space for local/regional narratives to emerge. The Matabeleland conflict in

summarised as: power-mongering, liberation war appeals, and violent intimidation of the civilian populations.

⁹³⁴ Interview: GS1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 17/08/06 – (Shona Human Rights Lawyer and survivor of severe torture as a political prisoner under the ZANU-PF government).

Zimbabwe provides a curious and relevant case study in this regard. When ZANU came to power in 1980, there were already afloat highly influential and well-established political narratives of liberation from colonial/minority white rule that became the ‘wave’ in which ZANU rode upon as it claimed victory in the independence of Zimbabwe. This narrative rallied against all forms of neo-colonialism, capitalistic greed, racism and unjust oppressive regimes across the so-called two-thirds world. It also hailed the idea of justified violent revolutions ushering in democratic change, multi-party politics and racial reconciliation. Behind this ideological rhetoric there were also practical geo-political considerations:

“I think that they [international community] acted in an expedient fashion. I think that they had other objectives in mind. The most important thing was to keep Mugabe out of the Soviet Bloc, to a less extent, out of the influence, beyond the influence of the Chinese... The second thing was that the West was very much focused on trying to bring Apartheid to an end and they saw Mugabe as being their key component in resolving that crisis... [Evidence] shows that Western NGO’s like Oxfam actually read reports of what was going on [in Matabeleland] as early as March 1983. But those reports were stifled. Furthermore, there were contemporaneous press reports in leading British and other newspapers. So, it’s hard to conceive how Western Governments didn’t know what was going on. We also know that in some countries, notably Canada and Australia, where people have used access to information, ‘freedom of information’ laws that pertain in those countries. They have managed into go to archives, and I’m told, I haven’t seen it myself, but I’m told that there’s very clear evidence that those governments knew what was going on. *The West conveniently chose to ignore.*”⁹³⁵

ZANU-PF was highly tactical in taking advantage of this international narrative, not only did they ride the wave of anti-colonial racism but they also gave ‘lip-service’ to the democratic reform being called for. As the world celebrated the ZANU-PF’s victory in the revolution and the 1980 Elections, the ZANU-PF was poised as the ‘golden child’ of the West and handed a blank cheque of ‘white guilt’ to do as they pleased. This kind of international euphoria, characterised by an uncritical and unreflective type of sweeping idealist narrative became a dangerous snare and provided the necessary canopy of protection to hide almost any form of political and social repression enacted by ZANU-PF. *Thus, as the world cheered on the revolutionary victory of black independence over white supremacy regimes in Africa, ZANU-PF launched an outright frontal attack on its*

⁹³⁵ Interview: DC1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe - 13/09/07 (White Zimbabwean Human Rights Lawyer and politician).

black opposition and all those who seemed to threaten the power monopoly their one-party state rule was bent on solidifying and enjoying. Unfortunately, the ZANU-PF was not only successful in hiding its Matabeleland treachery from the international community (the first eclipsing narrative) it also duped the majority population in Mashonaland who believed that their government was legitimately containing a rebellion (the second eclipsing narrative):

“While it will be easy for someone in Manicaland, or in Harare for that matter, or any other part of the country, to believe what was being said in the media to say, *the government has only gone as far as quashing a rebellion that sought to overthrow a legitimately elected government of the day.* It would be naïve actually for anyone to think otherwise or to want to believe otherwise or to want to interrogate such kind of situations or statements coming from the government. But for people who were on the ground in the Midlands and in the Matabeleland, it was obviously to them a different story because they were the people who were the victims, they were the people who were on the ground to actually experience these things firsthand. And I’m sure, I can only imagine what they were feeling then to want to ‘let out’ or ‘to let [it be] known’ what they have seen, to recount what did happen to them, to their loved-ones and to their relatives, you know, that kind of thing.”⁹³⁶

This unquestioning narrative of justified liberationist violence coming from the international and the national Mashona communities not only gave the covering of impunity to ZANU-PF’s internal violence, it had the cumulative effect of even further silencing the victim’s voices of Matabeleland (the third eclipsing narrative). There was no place or space to point an accusing finger at the ZANU-PF who embodied the hopeful expectations of so many peoples across the globe who were living under oppression and who were toiling with perseverance to see the fruition of their liberation. The results were catastrophic in terms of the victim-survivors of the Matabeleland massacres who effectively had their narratives subjugated by three eclipsing narratives. First, their cries for help were subjugated by the cacophony of the international narrative of justified violent revolution. Second, they were silenced through fear and terror by the state-sanctioned Gukurahundi violence and the quiet approval of the majority of Mashonaland. Third, the Gukurahundi violence insured a traumatic silence among the civilian population themselves by forcing them to participate in the killing of one another;

⁹³⁶ Interview: SD1, Johannesburg, South Africa - 18/08/06 – (Shona Human Rights Lawyer).

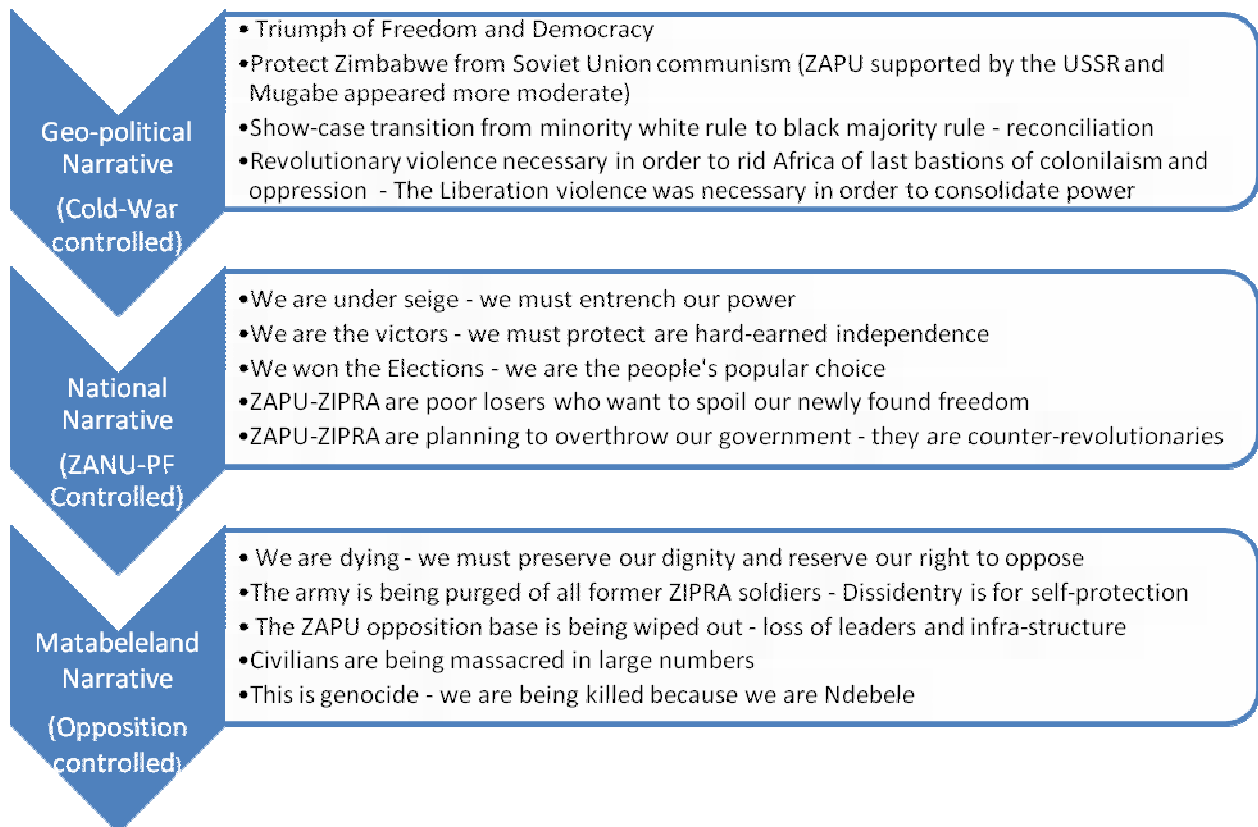
massacring their own neighbours and fellow villagers leaving a mortified, internalised horror across the Matabeleland region. This internal silence was further cemented when after 2000, another set of victims voices (all opposition to ZANU-PF including Shona-speaking activists), who had experienced political violence were given audience by the outside world in what appeared to be a prioritisation by the international community *overshadowing* the voices of the Matabeleland survivors once again.

“And people in Matabeleland have developed an attitude of saying ‘we will just keep quiet’ because even the outside world didn’t listen to our story. When we cried and said ‘here we are, we are suffering at this time when we thought we have attained our Independence’, the outside world kept quiet. And so many people up to now, they are really worried even to this moment they are saying ‘okay, when Mugabe came into power, we told the outside world that here is the person whom we thought is going to be our saviour, he is killing us’. The outside world kept quiet. And they [people of Matabeleland] are saying ‘now, why was it like that?’ And they are saying ‘now, it’s surprising that it’s only now that the outside world is now seeing that this man really can kill people’, because a lot of people have been killed. And they are saying ‘now, it’s surprising that the outside world is becoming now really concerned’. And they are feeling that maybe they [outside world] are not really also genuine because they are feeling that ‘it’s only maybe that the White farmers are now affected, that the colonial powers are coming back and seeing that ‘okay, this man was bad’. Because there was never a time when we felt that really Britain was concerned about what Mugabe was doing to the people of Matabeleland...Nobody listened to them.”⁹³⁷

Diagram 5 below illustrates the thematic and contradictory essence of the three layers of eclipsing narratives that served to silence the witness and testimony of the Matabeleland victims of violence.

⁹³⁷ Interview: CM2, Kitwe, Zambia – 09/05/07 - (Ndebele teacher and community development worker with Orphans and Vulnerable Children, former Political Activist and Youth Leader for ZAPU in the early 1980s).

Diagram 5: Eclipsing Narratives



The last 'eclipsing' of the internal narratives of Matabeleland victims by the recent Mashonaland victims who have garnered the attention of human rights activists worldwide, has little to do with the actual motivations of the Mashona (whether or not they are hard-hearted or callous). Rather, it has much more to do with the fickle and hypocritical nature of the international community and their expedient manner of 'policing' the geo-political issues that serve their narrow self-interests while discarding those that do not. Put differently, when Mugabe and the ZANU-PF were the liberation victors they were claimed as the key protagonists in the rhetorical narrative discourse of both the East and the West as antagonists in the Cold War stand-off. For the East it was a script of triumph for socialism and communism and for the West it was one of democracy and freedom. As the world (East and West) rejoiced in each of their respective ideological triumphs (albeit highly contrasting in nature), they decided to turn a blind eye and a deaf ear to any indications of violent repression being used by the ZANU-PF against their own people. However, when the cries of the victims of recent political

violence came to the fore after decades of revelations that ZANU-PF and Mugabe truly did exhibit violent dictatorial tendencies, the West was now suddenly attentive. Certainly, one could argue that the global awareness and advocacy attention around issues of human rights violations has heightened considerably since 1980 and the fall of communism, however, the outside world *did* know of the Matabeleland massacres and chose to remain ‘neutral’ for the sake of ‘political correctness’ on all sides of the Cold War scenario. *Thus, the world’s inaction became the indirect instrument of consent for, and an accomplice to the silencing of the narratives of Matabeleland violence and the scripts of the victims and survivors of the Matabeleland massacres were seemingly lost in obscurity.*

As mentioned above, the most important difference between the experience of the victims of Gukurahundi and those of recent repression is that the current victims of ZANU-PF violence have captured the listening ear of the international community and as a result have had opportunity to galvanize the needed global support to cause a public outcry. Until recently, the Matabeleland victims could only dream of such advocacy on their behalf however, the Matabeleland narrative refuses to disappear. As the old adage goes, ‘*The blood cries out from the ground*’⁹³⁸, so it is in Matabeleland. Interestingly, as a new space opens up on the international stage for the witness and testimony of Zimbabwean victims of recent political violence, the suppressed voice of the Matabeleland victims is finding new channels through which to surface and be highlighted in the public domain for the first time.

What appears to be occurring is that there is a growing citizen’s movement that is pushing forward with a new set of eclipsing narratives. These eclipsing narratives are contrasting to those at the time of independence in two significant ways. First, instead of the promotion of narratives characterised by self-interested, geo-political ideologies promoted at the expense of genuine freedom and justice for the masses, these new eclipsing narratives are driven by local contexts of traumatised communities who are rising above geographical and political divisions and seeking authentic healing and

⁹³⁸ *The Holy Bible* – New International Version. 1973. Genesis 4:10. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Bible Publishers, 4. This quote is adapted from the story of the first homicide recorded in the Bible when Cain murdered his brother Abel. Verse 10 actually reads, “The Lord said [to Cain], ‘What have you done? Listen! *Your brother’s blood cries out to me from the ground.*”

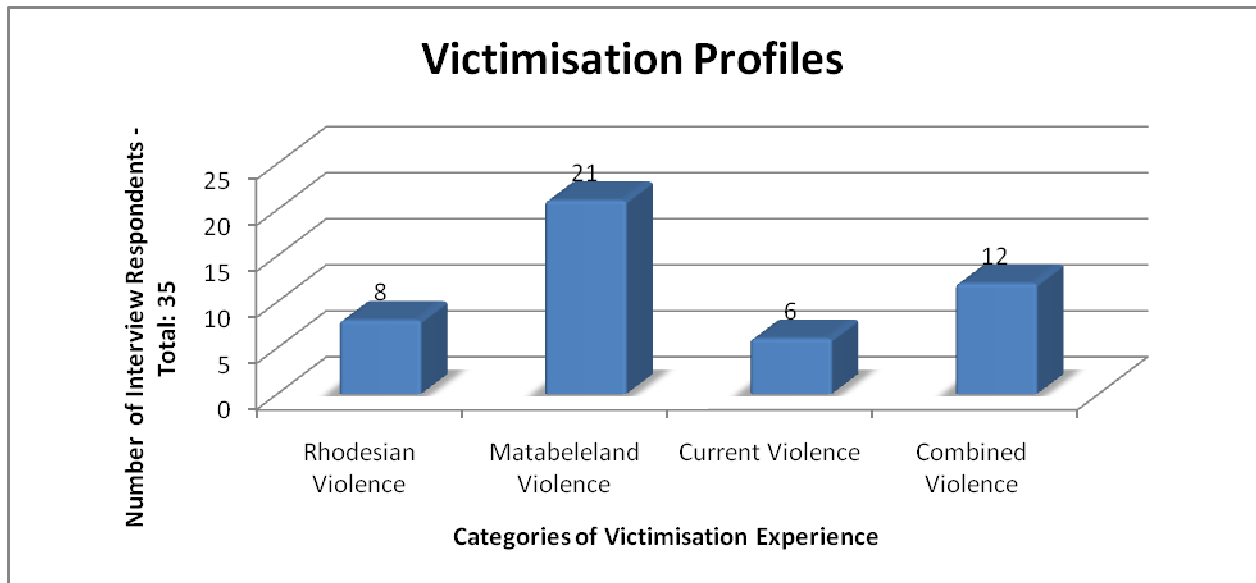
justice. Second, instead of a top-down approach guided by a few high-up leaders these new eclipsing narratives are being propelled from the ground; a bottom-up approach led by a multiplicity of popular leadership that represent networks of grass-roots constituencies. The sequencing in vertical movement of these sets of eclipsing narratives is also different. Whereas, in 1980 it moved from international to national and then down to the regional/local level, the current eclipsing narratives seem to be moving from the regional/local sphere to the international stage of transitional justice and then finally bringing a transformative pressure to bear at the national level. However, all this is yet to unfold in full and thus it is conjecture at present. What is important to take cognizance of, and to build upon is the evident momentum that is occurring as *multiple victims* of political violence across all political divides in Zimbabwe begin to give utterance and leadership to their demand for healing, reconciliation and justice under the watchful eyes of international instruments of human rights protection and advocacy.

9.4. Multiple Victims, Layers of Silence

Zimbabwe as a nation presently has multiple layers of traumatised victims and survivors to deal with in its future. The interview sample of this study consisted of a number of distinct categories of survivors of political violence in Zimbabwe. First, there were those whose primary experience was focused on the political violence of the colonial Rhodesian government (the older generation). Second, there were those who experienced the Matabeleland massacres in the 1980s (representing the largest number of the purposive sample). Third, there were those who experienced the more recent political violence since 2000 (representing the smallest number of the purposive sample). Fourth, there were those who had experienced multiple layers of victimisation, those who represented one or more of the *combinations* of victimisation mentioned above (representing the medium number of the purposive sample). **Diagram 6** below lays out these various categories of victimisation and their corresponding numbers extracted from the purposive interview sample (total of 35) from this thesis research project. This graph charts out the nature of the research sample as representative of inter-generational, as well as multiple and protracted experiences of trauma. The intersection of these various victim-survivor narratives sheds light on the interplay between the past and present

formulations of violence and the exploration of peaceful co-existence in Zimbabwe for the future.

Diagram 6: Purposive Interview Sample - Multiple Layers of Victimisation



Following the formation of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) opposition party in 1999 and the ZANU-PF's defeating 'no confidence' vote in a referendum in February 2000, there was a rash of Zimbabwean victims of political violence; killings, imprisonment, abduction, rape and torture. As indicated in the previous section, a major difference between the state-sanctioned violence of the early 1980s and that of the early 2000s was that the most recent violence tended to focus on Mashonaland as opposed to Matabeleland as was the case at the time of Gukurahundi. What this meant is that for the Matabele this phenomenon gave rise to a strong sense of *historical vindication* on their part. For the Matabele, it was understood that *now* Mashonaland was experiencing the state violence that they as Matabeleland had been struggling to overcome for decades. For the Matabele survivors it was an empowering moment in which they could seriously express to their Mashona counterparts, 'we told you so, but you would not believe'. However, this proverbial sense of retributive satisfaction on the part of the Matabele was not always expressed with empathy; at times it was said with a

certain smug ‘aloofness’, as if coming from a distant, removed onlooker, reminiscent of the posture taken by a majority of Mashona during the time of Gukurahundi.

For the ‘new’ victims of political violence scattered across Mashonaland, this state-sanctioned violence was both startling and overwhelming. It was surprising because many of the Mashona political activists and civil society stalwarts never believed that ‘their’ liberationist government could turn on them with such terrorising violence. It was overwhelming because their revolutionary dream of a free and democratic Zimbabwe was now crumbling before their eyes two decades into Independence. For understandable reasons, many of the recent victims of state-supported political violence were hard-pressed to focus on anything but their own recent trauma. Thus, to try and lead them back to reflect on the trauma of the Matabeleland massacres of the early 1980s was highly difficult if not, impossible. This was due to two reasons: First, many of the recent victims of political violence were Mashona and they had little knowledge or awareness of the Matabeleland killings of the past (due to past government media control). The classical plea of political ignorance by the complacent majority, ‘we did not know’ is often evoked in this instance. Second, even those Mashona who did have some knowledge of the Gukurahundi violence, while able to cognitively empathise with the Matabele survivors found it hard in the midst of their own severe trauma to make sustainable connections between the past tragedy of Matabeleland and their present state of distress.

Thus, outside of the experience of white Rhodesian violence shared by the older generation of black Zimbabweans *across* the country, one finds a scenario of two distinct groupings of victims in Zimbabwe; those who survived the Matabeleland massacres and those who survived the current political violence, who mostly hail from Mashonaland. These two groups have been isolated from each other; separated geographically as well as by their unreconciled trauma. The Matabeleland survivors are often unable to reach *forward* in empathy to the Mashona victims because they are still locked in their historical pain that has never been given opportunity to be spoken about, dealt with, and/or healed from. The Mashonaland survivors are often unable to reach *backward* in empathy to the Matabeleland survivors because they are still consumed with the present shock of their recent trauma and find it hard to move past their own self-absorbed pity. In this way, the actual responses to the resulting traumatising of political violence have

served to *divide* rather than *unite* the victims who jointly suffered under severe state-sanctioned repression.

However, outside of the isolating trauma between these two groups of victims, they share a common experience of both being silenced by the ZANU-PF. Not only have the voices of the Matabeleland victims been historically silenced, but another entire set of recent Mashonaland victims have also been suppressed, gagged and physically dislocated by being chased out of the country since the year 2000.⁹³⁹ The resultant confusion from this continuous subjugation of victimisation narratives springs from the forceful, layered process of *multiple silencing* whereby neither the past or present groups of victims have been given any recognised platform in which to tell their stories. However, while this multiple silencing is being ‘officially’ enforced by the ZANU-PF government at a local, regional and national level, as mentioned above, the international community is now providing a ready audience for the dramatisation of these pivotal victim transcripts. This research points to what appears to be a promising connection between these victim-survivors coming out of these different time periods of political violence in Zimbabwe’s history.

Out of the ashes of their shared suffering under the terror of ZANU-PF, there is potential for a fresh, hopeful level of *survivor solidarity* pulsating among both Matabele and Mashona victims of violence. The key bridge-spanning links in this consolidation of solidarity seem to be two-fold in nature. First, this sense of solidarity resides in those persons that have walked an intensive journey of trauma healing. Second, it also resides in those who carry the historic memory or actual experience of being victims and survivors of multiple periods of national political violence. These interlocutors are the individuals who carry the long view; they refuse to get stuck in the memories of the past (those who have unresolved trauma from Rhodesia or Matabeleland) or paralysed by the horror of the present (those who cannot see beyond their own current trauma). Instead, these inter-generational mediators of healing stand poised for the future, confident that

⁹³⁹ Accurate figures are not accessible. However, estimates are that there are approximately 500,000 legal and up to 2 million illegal Zimbabweans living in South Africa and at least 1 million living in the UK alone. This represents one quarter of the Zimbabwean population which numbered at 11,631,657 in the 2002 census. Retrieved from the web on 28/09/09 <http://zimpundit.blogspot.com/2005/08/census-numbers-out.html> ; <http://www.migrationinformation.org/Feature/display.cfm?ID=689> ; <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/4416820.stm>

the ZANU-PF violence system will be fully exposed, and ready to give public testimony to the narratives of decadal political violence with integrity, consistency and conviction. *Matabeleland survivors* who have passed through a process of trauma recovery are strategically positioned to play this intercessory role as they have witnessed and often experienced multiple time periods and expressions of political violence. This emerging nation-wide network of solidarity is making room for all voices of victimisation in Zimbabwe which is bringing forth a new attentiveness to the Matabeleland story for the first time.

“...of course there is a continuation of violence. *It’s a continuation of violence in the sense that the ‘issues’ that were pertinent in the lives of the people, have not been addressed.* And therefore there is always that expectation of an explosion, when people remain a time-bomb, as it were, for along time. But it’s disconnected in that it is not necessarily arising from Matabeleland. *It is arising from other quarters that simply find fertile ground of people that opposes [ZANU-PF], that’s how I’m seeing that.*”⁹⁴⁰

“My hope is in that ‘okay, the ZANU-PF government will not live forever’. And I believe that maybe when somebody come[s] up; these issues will be dealt with appropriately. But at the present moment, ah! , it’s very difficult to say where we are going because things seem to be going worse. *It’s surprising that at the present moment, even those people who, when we were experiencing these atrocities in Matabeleland, were supporting Mugabe; they are now coming back to say, ‘really this man did a lot of pain to the people of Matabeleland’. Even those who were close to him, those who were thinking he was doing the right thing because of their affiliation of their ethnic grouping in Mashonaland, they are still feeling now ‘yes, this man did a lot of bad things in Matabeleland’. Yeah, the hope is there, because we would believe God has a way out for us in this situation.*”⁹⁴¹

It is this sense of *common solidarity* that will overcome the archaic instruments of ‘divide and rule’ that have dominated the ZANU-PF’s tactics over Matabeleland in the past and Mashonaland in the present, and that could create an open healing space for the people of Zimbabwe to *jointly* dream about a different future.

⁹⁴⁰ Interview: DN1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 29/03/07 – (Ndebele Church Leader whose father was killed by 5th Brigade soldiers in 1984).

⁹⁴¹ Interview: CM2, Kitwe, Zambia – 09/05/07 - (Ndebele teacher and community development worker with Orphans and Vulnerable Children, former Political Activist and Youth Leader for ZAPU in the early 1980s).

9.5. No Room for a Future View

“Zimbabwe has been a country stuck at looking backwards. It needs to look forward. It needs to look forward with hope. And I think the reason why it hasn’t been able to look forward is because these leaders won’t allow it. *Because the leaders are concerned that if the people look too far forward, they’ll see a future without them in it.* And I think that terrifies a number of leaders in Zimbabwe.”⁹⁴²

One of the most gripping aspects of the meta-narrative of ZANU-PF is that it has forced the people of Zimbabwe to live in a perpetual state of the *present*. This ‘present’ state of consciousness was entrenched in, and informed by a historical text that was *imposed* on the current reality. The ZANU-PF script of patriotic history was so tightly woven together that it produced a sophisticated system of *uniform* thinking and acting among a majority of ordinary citizens. Most of the unique, individual resistance or personal agency of political differentiation was immobilised under the cynical rhetoric of an ideology that would terribly deconstruct and demolish all contrary notions and worldview ideations that it encountered or that it perceived to be standing in its way. Beyond the immediate goal of an imposed uniformity in thinking and acting, the ZANU-PF meta-narrative served to *protect* the ruling regime by refusing to allow the Zimbabwean citizenry the freedom to exercise their political imagination and thereby dream of a future without the ZANU-PF.

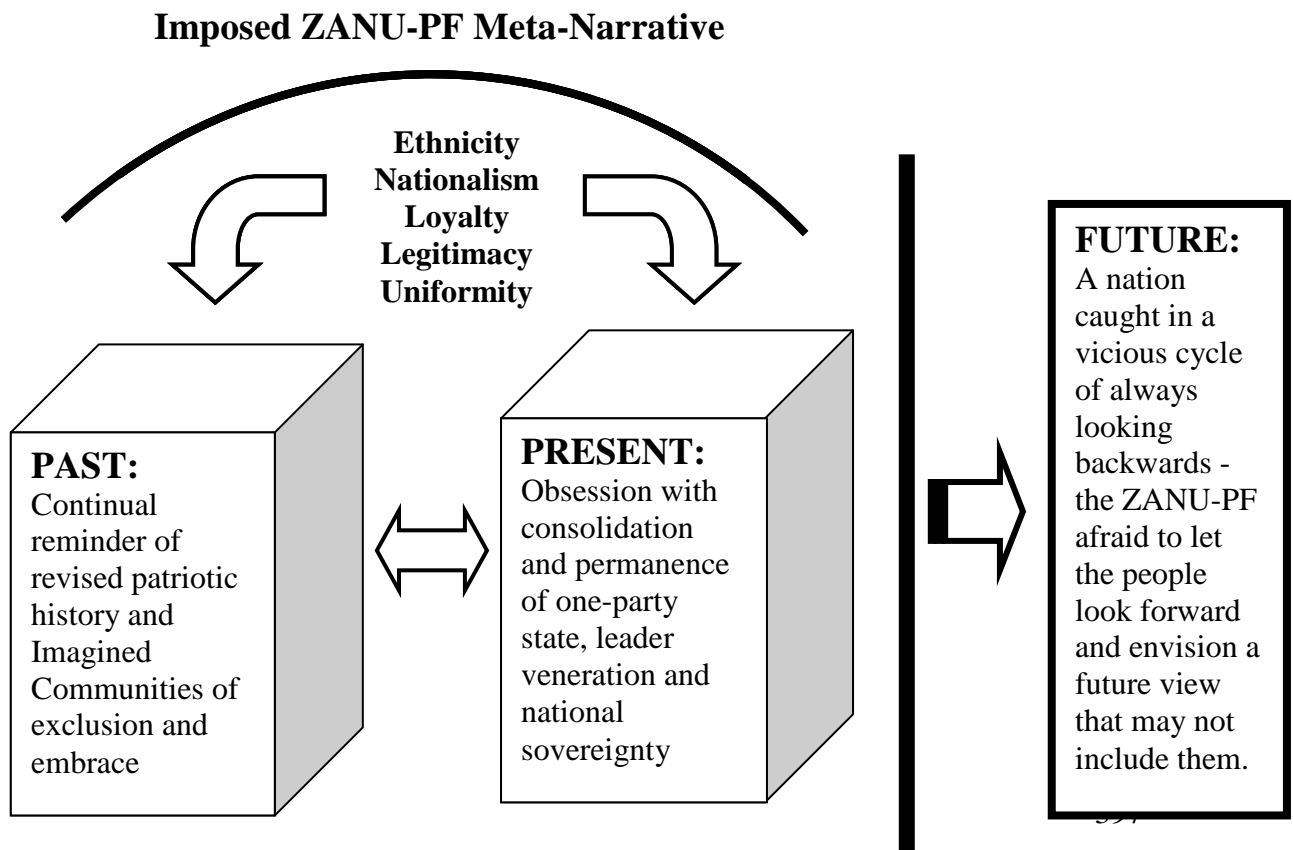
It has been imperative for the ZANU-PF government to keep a tight reign on the subjugated narratives of Matabeleland precisely because these repressed scripts do not feature ZANU-PF or Mugabe in their *future-view*. Many political analysts surmise that the ZANU-PF’s cling to power is motivated by the ‘blood on their hands’ from past violence reaching back into the internal leadership struggles within the liberation movement. This study would suggest that it is not only the ZANU-PF’s tangible fear of prosecution that motivates their power mongering, but just as importantly, it is the related visceral fear that in the event of the oppositional leadership inheriting the helm of political power in Zimbabwe, they will eliminate ZANU-PF from the national script. In the same way that ZANU-PF attempted to erase the ZAPU-ZIPRA alliance from the

⁹⁴² Interview: TM1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 01/11/07 – (Shona Businessman whose relative was a prominent leader in the ZANU-PF government).

liberation struggle history (Chapter 6: Section 6.3.3.), now ZANU-PF is afraid of being written out of Zimbabwe's history for the generations to come. For Mugabe and his ZANU-PF henchmen to be lost in the memory of future generations is a terrifying thought.

Diagram 7 below shows the component parts of the imposed meta-narrative of the ZANU-PF. Buttressed by the five themes interrogated throughout this thesis: ethnicity, nationalism, loyalty, legitimacy and uniformity; the ZANU-PF meta-narrative was suspended in a 'liminal' space between the past and present. The ZANU-PF existed for the present; its one aim was to secure and protect its power through the establishment of a one-party state, perpetual leader veneration, and the nurturing of a fiercely independent national sovereignty in the present. In order to explain its *present* state, the ZANU-PF continually invoked a *past* filled with revisionist patriotic history and a stream of enemy formulations that defined self and 'other' in imagined binary categories. There was no *future* narrative in the ZANU-PF scheme, because the future would inevitably involve change, something that ZANU-PF was unwilling to engage in, especially if they were not central to the change taking place.

Diagram 7: No Future without the ZANU-PF



In summary, the necessity of a future view is a relatively new demand in Zimbabwe. The Gukurahundi violence occurred in the context of the birth of an independent nation and therefore the only direction in which the newly elected black government and its followers could look was into the future. However, the current violence has been unleashed in an exceptionally different context; one characterised by an ‘*exhausted nationalism*’⁹⁴³. Key to this exhausted nationalism is a whole new generation born after 1980 crying for a future vision that will capture their imagination; something the ZANU-PF government has been unable or unwilling to offer them. The demand for a fresh, unifying future direction or the alternative call for Matabeleland *secession*⁹⁴⁴ remain strident as is evident in these interview respondent scripts:

“Because I still believe in Matabeleland people need to approach that area [patriotism] with also this question of *generations*. That the old guard, that is now the die-hard supporters of ZANU-PF in Matabeleland and who think ZAPU is inside and we are now following ZAPU, and there is now no other party than ZAPU. And they are many in Matabeleland, Ndebele-speaking people who are fanatic about that. *But the younger generations which is actually against all those things. The end of ZAPU was the beginning of alienation groups instead, from the country, from everything. And it is this alienation from the party, the government, and the State itself, which has produced this ‘Mthwagazi’ politics who is based in the UK and which is maybe happening for the secession of Matabeleland from mainland people.*”⁹⁴⁵

“They took it [patriotism] very seriously. I think at one stage it was very serious, and now they don’t care. For the man in the street, now he doesn’t care. In particular, because the man in the street now, *the bigger population of the man in the street are people who never knew the war, or what I call ‘born-frees’, because they were born after 1980. So the majority of the population are very young...* And I’ve seen people who’ve been the most ardent supporters of ZANU-PF, turn against ZANU-PF when they realized that this is not about the people anymore, it’s about one man. *And it’s sort-of like when you start a deviation of two lines going up from a point. When you’re only starting it doesn’t look as if they’re that far apart, but many kilometres down they’re miles apart and it looks*

⁹⁴³ Bond, P. & Manyanya, M. 2002. *Zimbabwe’s Plunge – Exhausted Nationalism, Neo-liberalism and the Search for Social Justice*. Durban: University of Natal Press.

⁹⁴⁴ The call for Matabeleland secession is a clear indication of the extent of ‘exhausted nationalism’ felt in certain parts of Zimbabwe. While a majority of the interview respondents suggested that unity would require some form of national truth and reconciliation process, there were a few adamant voices that insisted that an armed struggle, international criminal courts, secession, or some variation of a highly federalist governance system were the only ways forward.

⁹⁴⁵ Interview: SG1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 20/12/07 - (Ndebele professor of Political Science, researcher and author).

like they were never together...some people did realize the consequence of some of Mugabe's rhetoric."⁹⁴⁶

9.6. In Search of Harmonising Narratives

*"Since wars are born in the minds of men,
it is in the minds of men we must build the ramparts of peace."*⁹⁴⁷

It is the premise of this thesis that just as violence meta-narratives predicate structural violence and the manufacture of systematic violent action, so multi-narratives of non-violence if allowed to flourish lead to a corporate vision and responsible obligation to create and build durable peace at an individual and collective level. In reality, durable peace entails two crucial elements: First, durable peace requires bolstering *social capital*. Second, durable peace requires *material development*. Both of these component parts of durable peace are inextricably linked together, and have their origins in the narrative function of *social construction of preferred realities*. Social capital⁹⁴⁸ as a narrative discourse is nested in the nurturance of communal, relational networks. These networks lay a foundation for interactive connections and linkages that produce meaning, identity, dignity, and purpose as well as the production of power; collective power to change the configurations of social co-existence.⁹⁴⁹ Material development as a narrative discourse moves away from a focus on psycho-social human interactions and the accompanying creation of community, and grounds itself in the corporate structural production of systems, organisations and instrumentalities that secure human populations from systematic acts of aggression and violence that would otherwise severely disrupt daily life routines for protracted periods of time. Such infrastructural securities would primarily include legal, economic, food, health, and environmental

⁹⁴⁶ Interview: TM1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 01/11/07 – (Shona Businessman whose relative was a prominent leader in the ZANU-PF government).

⁹⁴⁷ Quote by Archibald McLeish. Despite the traditional and singularly sexist use of the word 'men' to generically represent 'humankind', if one can overlook the gendered language employed here, one can also appreciate that historically violence does feature more prominently in the minds of men than women. The violence systems of military, prisons and gangs readily confirm this majority male-dominated make-up. Whether due to biological predisposition, chemical balances of testosterone or socialisation processes, this remains the global reality.

⁹⁴⁸ Bourdieu, P. 1986. The Forms of Social Capital, in J Richardson (Ed.) *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, New York: Greenwood, 241-258.

⁹⁴⁹ Sawatsky, J. 2008. *Justpeace Ethics – A Guide to Restorative Justice and Peacebuilding*. Oregon: Cascade Books, 18-19. Sawatsky places the concept of 'interconnectedness' as the core (the heart of the matter) in his proposed model of Justpeace Ethics.

aspects of peace sustenance. Thus, from a peace-building argument, a strong social capital would ensure living in '*freedom from fear*' and a solid material development would secure living in '*freedom from want*' both of which are foundational measures for humanity to thrive.

For purposes of this thesis and its immediate concern with the study of narrative discourse, the following sections on future recommendations for peace-building will focus on the augmentation of social capital in the journey of violence recovery in Zimbabwe. That being said, these recommendations which are aimed at buttressing social capital are a critical forerunner to the establishment of a material development that enables long-term peace. Put differently, structural development that is transformative will necessarily be formed by a participative, engaged social capital, which in turn is shaped by a reflective and reflexive narrative discourse that is allowed to flow freely, yet at the same time is channelled in a constructive manner within the public domain. The recommendations that follow are fourfold; to re-construct *memory*, to re-establish *belonging and responsibility*, to re-invest in *participation*, and to re-engage in *healing*. These suggested frames are to be understood as 'sign-posts' that give guidance and direction in the search for harmonising narratives on the path to peace in Zimbabwe. They are premised on the following three assumptions:

- The subjugated narratives of the victims of Matabeleland need to be written into the historical narrative of Zimbabwe in order for there to be durable peace in the future of the nation.
- Transitional justice and peace-building practitioners will need to embark on a series of sustained 'dialogue encounters' in order for reconciliation and co-existence to be transformative in Zimbabwe for the generations to come.
- There is a need to publicly surface the silenced narratives of the victims of Matabeleland in order for healing to occur in the long-term.

9.6.1. Re-constructing a unifying Memory

Zimbabwe is poised on a thirty-year threshold since independence characterised by a perpetual bombardment of ZANU-PF patriotic history that attempted to manufacture a uniform national memory dating back to the late 1890s. The past and present victims of ZANU-PF political violence carry a more recent memory (since independence in 1980) that is continually being denied, minimised and strangled under the weight of the imposing ZANU-PF national meta-narrative. Hence, these post-independence survivors

of political violence are calling for an *interrogation* into the historical memory of Zimbabwe as a nation.

“So, I mean, you have to give Mugabe this: *he’s been consistent throughout saying ‘this is the voice, this is the version that is true and any other version is not true, is not valid, is not guarding the sovereignty of the nation’*, you know. ‘Any other voice is suspect’. And he’s been consistent about this right from 1980 until now. And I would say probably before then if you look at ZANU-PF’s history and ZANLA’s history. Mugabe has been consistent in trying to wipe out any other voice, any other version to what is happening to ‘just his’.”⁹⁵⁰

The Matabeleland region is particularly insistent on a narrative *post-mortem* as the complexities of its oppositional script have been reduced to insignificance under the dismissive label of dissident terror.

“If we are fighting a war on terror, then there is not need to consider the ideas, the aspirations, the historical grievances of the people who oppose us. We are simply fighting ‘terrorists’, people who believe in *nothing*, other than the blowing up of innocent civilians. History is erased... [and] is thus inherently amnesiac. When the enemy is imagined as crazy people who believe in nothing more than blowing up innocent people, there is no need to examine one’s own historical sins.”⁹⁵¹

Olga Botchavora⁹⁵², a Russian-born Psychologist who worked extensively with former Yugoslavian refugee populations, has situated the act of ‘*creating heroes*’ and ‘*creating enemies*’ (in the Zimbabwe case, ‘dissidents’) as part of the revenge cycle that facilitates the repetitive and destructive pattern of moving from being the victimized to being the aggressor. The antidote for this distorted hero and enemy formation is, according to Botchavora, the often elusive, but essential ministrations of ‘*re-writing history*’, both figuratively and actually. To be effective, this de-mystification and deconstruction of the historical memory has to be jointly contested as well as mutually agreed upon as a ‘consensus narrative’; a script that describes the past in plausible and acceptable terms to all the stakeholders involved in the conflict. Zimbabwe’s future peace is dependent on the national will to launch a historiography project that would aim to re-write the national patriotic history by folding in the formally subjugated voices of other

⁹⁵⁰ Interview: AM1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 10/08/06 – (White American Journalist who lived in Zimbabwe from 1980 until he was deported by the ZANU-PF government).

⁹⁵¹ Cavanaugh, W. 2006. “The Sacrifice of Love – The Eucharist as Resistance to Terror and Torture”. *A Lecture presented at O’Shea Centre, Wilston*. Melbourne: Catholic Communications, 15.

⁹⁵² Botchavora, Olga. 1996. Adapted from a presentation made at the European Conference on Peacemaking and Conflict Resolution (ECPCR) held in Varna, Bulgaria.

parallel liberation struggle structures (ZAPU-ZIPRA), the 1980s victims of Gukurahundi from Matabeleland as well as the recent victims of the last decade. This would require developing an integrated educational curriculum which would be taught in all schools across the country and that would represent this national consensus narrative and the diverse social contracts that are required to uphold it.

“I think Zimbabwe is a good example of the fact that there can be ‘*no single history*’. That there are going to be...you know, it’s to open up to say ‘there are ‘many’ different voices, many different accounts, many different versions of the same event, and we want to hear them all’. And each one is valid, and some are going to say ‘we’re invalid’ and some are going to be crazy but, you know, *we want a process in which all can step forward and say ‘this is mine, that was mine, that was my mother’s story, this is my aunt’s story, this is how it was told to me’, everything.*”⁹⁵³

Writing within the framework of ‘choosing appropriate conflict resolution processes’, author Pamela Machakanja suggests at least three constructive implications to consider when embarking on a national memory re-write of such a nature:

“Third, memories should be looked at historically; that is, one must realize that the meanings attached to the past change over time and are part of a larger, complex social and political dynamics and scenarios...Fourth, there exists the potential for conflict resolution in the transformation of memories of a violent past to memories of post-conflict justice and peace...Fifth, conflict resolution can act as a catalyst for cooperation and a bridge between the other sectors necessary to create peaceful social memories.”⁹⁵⁴

This recommended *historical revisionist* endeavour should not be based on a competitive clamouring of past voices each striving for dominance above all others in the public domain of the national psyche. Instead, it should be a critical, yet consensual re-writing of national memory which respects and honours a diverse set of shared recollections about national origins and make-up. This kind of memory re-write would serve a number of essential functions. First, it would usher in a form of symbolic justice; a *vindication* for those whose voices were repressed in the past. Second, it would create a sense of *restoration* for those who felt personally isolated and whose stories were marginalised from the collective social spaces of the nation for decades. Third, it would

⁹⁵³ Interview: AM1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 10/08/06 – (White American Journalist who lived in Zimbabwe from 1980 until he was deported by the ZANU-PF government).

⁹⁵⁴ Machakanja, P. 2008. “Politics of Memory: Collective Remembering and Manipulation of the Past in Zimbabwe”. *Africa Peace and Conflict Journal*, 1 (1): 63.

provide a vehicle through which *meaning* could be acknowledged and reinstated for the whole nation. Catholic theologian and author, William Cavanaugh insinuates that the act of meaning-making is wrapped up in our ability to utilise our imaginations:

“The point is more about *our* imagination. If we did not think of opponents...as enemies and backward fanatics, if we thought of them as rational beings, we would have to consider our own policies, and consider the possibility that opponents might have some legitimate grievances.”⁹⁵⁵

This need for meaning-making to occur in the lives of those who have survived severe violence cannot be underestimated. In her seminal work on trauma recovery, Dr. Judith Herman⁹⁵⁶ uses the analogy of broken, splintered glass as representative of the shattering aftermath of violence and trauma in an individual’s life. Central to Herman’s model of recovery from complex post-traumatic stress syndrome (PTSS) is the need to gather the disparate pieces of one’s trauma memory and fit them back together into the flow of a coherent life story that makes sense (has meaning) for the survivor once again. This ‘meaning-making’ effort only comes through a laborious process of repetitively recalling the trauma experience over an extended period of time. Just as the traumatised individual gains wholeness through this re-fitting of the scattered pieces of trauma into a cohesive life narrative, so too recovery from corporate trauma can occur when a grouping of people or a nation embarks on a historical memory re-write in order to tell and re-tell a shared, diverse and inclusive story to future generations. Re-telling the historical memory and harmonising the narratives of antagonists is “*essential to the task of rendering the terror understandable*.”⁹⁵⁷ As social anthropologist Paul Richards succinctly puts it, “*Only if the issues behind the terror are understood can the terror be deflated*”.⁹⁵⁸

⁹⁵⁵ Cavanaugh, W. 2006. “The Sacrifice of Love – The Eucharist as Resistance to Terror and Torture”. A *Lecture presented at O’Shea Centre, Wilston*. Melbourne: Catholic Communications, 13.

⁹⁵⁶ Herman, J. 1997. *Trauma and Recovery – The aftermath of violence from domestic abuse to political terror*. New York: Basic Books-a Division of HarperCollins Publishers.

⁹⁵⁷ Nordstrom, C. 1992. The Backyard Front, in C. Nordstrom and J. Martin (eds.) *The Paths of Domination, Resistance and Terror*. Berkeley: University of Berkeley Press.

⁹⁵⁸ Richards, P. 1996. *Fighting for the Rain Forest – War, Youth & Resources in Sierra Leone*. Oxford: James Curry, xxix.

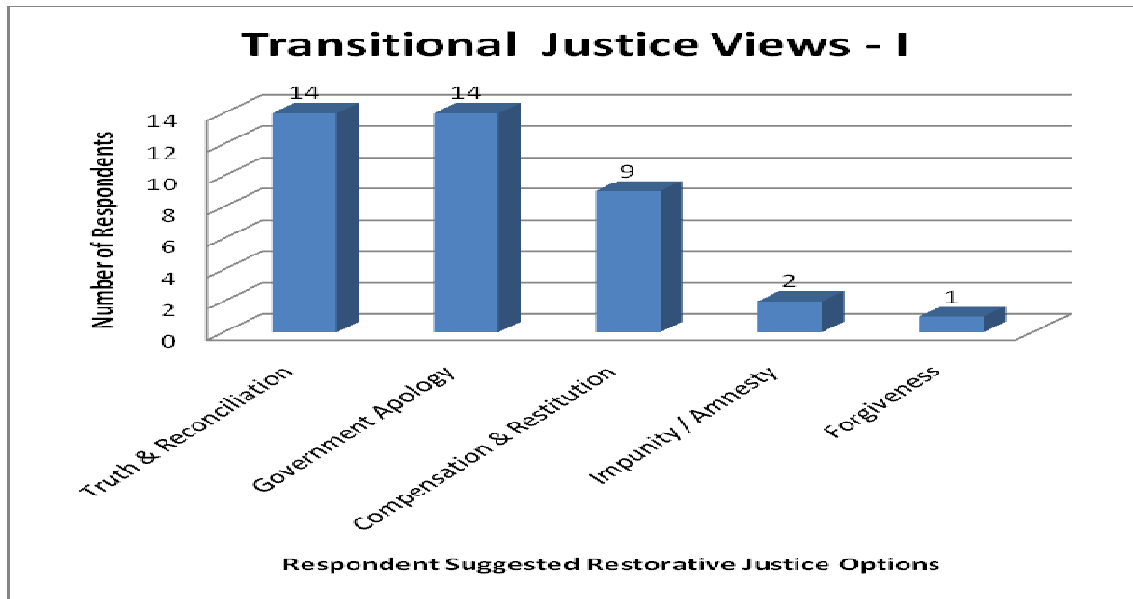
9.6.2. Re-establishing corporate Belonging and Responsibility

This thesis has explored the contested nature of ‘belonging’ and its powerful manipulation by the ZANU-PF through the imposition of a meta-narrative of order (Chapter 5), exclusion (Chapter 6), and discipline (Chapter 7). Those who dared to defy or resist the script of uniformity (Chapter 8) imposed by the ruling political party were effectively disposed of, ostracised or silenced. *Belonging* is deeply dependent on the inter-subjectivity of *recognition* and *respect* which in turn is tied to the formation and affirmation of *dignity* as a human person (see Chapter 6: Sections 6.3.1 and 6.4). To bolster the formulations of belonging and responsibility in divided nations such as Zimbabwe is to add to the quotient of human dignity which is the critical motivation for increased commitment to nation-building; the expression of an identification bond with a particular people grouping.

During the severe and protracted violence of the Gukurahundi period, the people of Matabeleland not only suffered a great physical trauma, they also suffered a great humiliation; the loss of human dignity. Once a people have been stripped of a precious psycho-social commodity such as this (human dignity) it cannot easily be replaced. One of the key avenues being used to restore human dignity and the sense of human worth in transitional justice approaches is that of national truth-telling and reconciliation programmes. The recovery of national truth and reconciliation are proving to be essential in the re-establishment of belonging and responsibility in the political spheres of a nation and these values (belonging and responsibility) supply critical ingredients for a sustained unity and restoration at a collective level in society.

The interview respondents of this research articulated a wide spectrum of transitional justice views ranging from national healing processes to armed struggle against the ZANU-PF. These varying transitional justice views have been categorised as *restorative justice* options (**Diagram 8**) and *adversarial justice* options (**Diagram 9**) in the below charts.

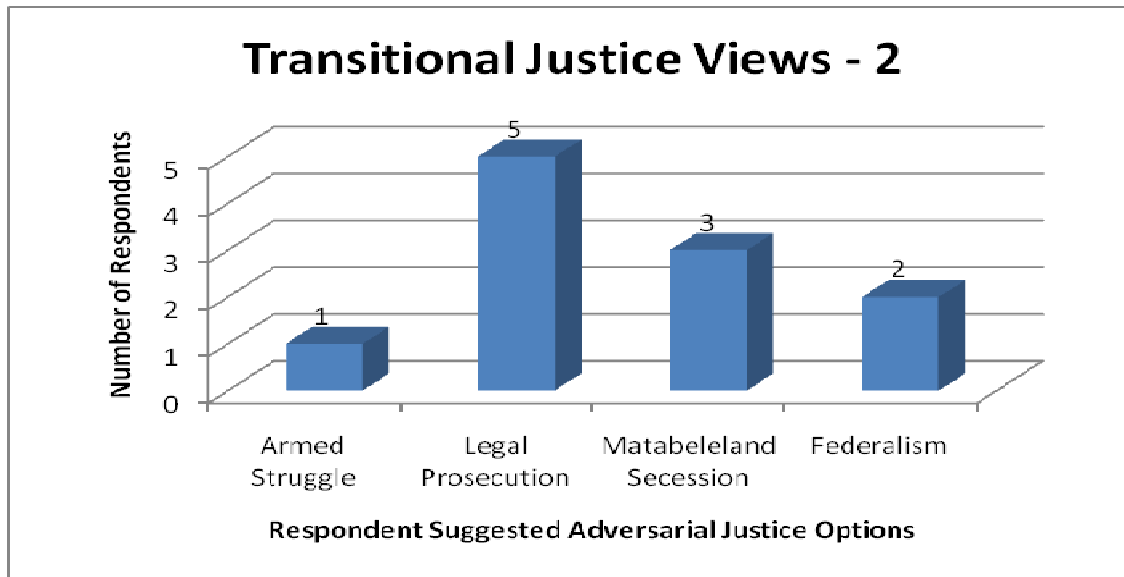
Diagram 8: Transitional Justice Views Chart – 1



This thesis unearthed a strong and urgent call for Zimbabwe to institute a *national truth-telling* (justice) and *story-sharing* (reconciliation) exercise often referenced by the various Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) efforts conducted across Africa and globally. As indicated by the above chart (**Diagram 8**), most interview respondents endorsed a restorative justice application (truth and reconciliation, apology, and compensation) in Zimbabwe’s transition to peace. This is a positive result especially in view of the degree of trauma and repression that many of the respondents have experienced as either primary or secondary victims of severe and protracted violence.

Diagram 9 below exhibits a smaller number of respondents who leaned heavily on adversarial responses (whether violent or not) as appropriate transitional justice measures. All of the respondents in this category hailed from professional backgrounds based on punitive ideologies such as military, security services or legal professions. Adversarial approaches were more readily promoted by those who appeared to still be in a traumatised state of being; unable to move on from their past experiences of violence.

Diagram 9: Transitional Justice Views Chart – 2



The majority response in favour of restorative justice approaches is significant in a number of ways. First, it indicates that despite the severe and protracted violence experienced by many Matabele there remains a *strong commitment* to unify, reconcile and heal the nation of Zimbabwe. Second, this would suggest that there are *resources* for trauma healing and non-adversarial responses to violence that are available and perceived as viable for the communities of Matabeleland. Third, it speaks to the enduring and drawing power of *non-violent narrative applications* (relationship building through dialogue and negotiations) for social co-existence and peace-building by the people, as opposed to *violent structural applications* (forced legal or institutionally imposed order) for the political power and empire-building purposes of a few. In sum, despite their tragic past, this sample research would indicate that many people in Matabeleland look as if they are prepared to stake a claim in the future of Zimbabwe as *their* country **(belonging)**, respectfully acknowledge the inherent diversity within the nation **(politics of recognition and dignity)** and take the risk to search and discover a '*shared moral landscape*'⁹⁵⁹ that would function to guide and direct their attempts to reconstruct their livelihoods for the common good of all **(responsibility)**. Given the vision, freedom and

⁹⁵⁹ Ericson, M. 2001. *Reconciliation and the Search for a Shared Moral Landscape*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang Publishers, 27-36.

the appropriate opportunities, the Matabeleland region seems poised to play an active, even leading role in harmonising the shaping narratives of historic memory and future restoration of the nation.

9.6.3. Re-investing in public Participation

“I don’t know if a voice will be able to rise; ‘a voice of the voiceless’ if you want to call it, whereby people will be able to stand up and talk freely. Well I’m sure people ‘are talking’, the problem is ‘no-one is listening’. The problem is no-one is listening, the government is not listening.”⁹⁶⁰

Despite any number of flirtations with democratic, multi-party ideations over the past few decades, the ZANU-PF from its inception has remained resolutely committed to the establishment of a *de facto* one-party state (Chapter 5). A one-party state whether benevolent or not, by its very nature cannot afford to allow a diversity of opposing structures or voices of alternative reasoning to flow freely, or it will run the risk of loosing control of its power. In the case of Zimbabwe, this centrifugal pull toward one-party state politics did not make room for a genuine, participatory administration of power-sharing and unity building, much less submit itself to a collective narrative re-tell (see Section 9.5.1.). When participative outlets are not available or are systematically denied the individual and/or the corporate body of citizenry that makes up a nation, it is extremely *disempowering* and debilitating over time. Resuscitating the machinations of public participation in Zimbabwe will not only serve to liberate and free the populace it will also *empower* the masses to re-engage in the constructive pursuit of re-building Zimbabwe. Public participation processes are instrumental in the production of ‘empowerment’.

The conception of ‘*participation*’ in the scheme of social capital production moves beyond the domain of added value and into the realm of fundamental human need theory. In the field of conflict resolution studies, Professor John Burton pioneered the idea of the interconnectivities of conflict and the denial of human need. It was Burton’s premise that if subaltern human needs (like participation) are being denied or threatened,

⁹⁶⁰ Interview: DL1, Johannesburg, South Africa – 11/08/06 - (Ndebele Journalist employed as a business editor for a prominent newspaper).

conflict resolution efforts will be impeded. In other words, people who feel that their fundamental human needs are being violated will resort to survivalist, instinctual conflict behaviour and will use any accessible power to guard and defend their sense of human need fulfilment. Regardless of the skill with which a particular conflict resolution process is facilitated, if parties to the conflict feel that their freedom to participate is being inhibited, a satisfactory resolution to the conflict at hand is highly unlikely.⁹⁶¹

Dove-tailing with Burton's theory is the notion of Human Scale Development, a people-centred framework for development formulated by Chilean economist, Manfred Max-Neef. Max-Neef identifies what he terms are nine fundamental human needs that are universal in theory (superseding economic, social or cultural status) and yet particular in context application. These needs are the spokes of the wheel of human 'existence' (being) and 'activity' (doing). These nine fundamental needs are protection, idleness (leisure), creation, subsistence, affection, identity, understanding, freedom and *participation*. When any of these 'spokes' are damaged or broken the wheel of 'wholeness' is thrown into a state of imbalance. Max-Neef explains that these fundamental needs are met through what he terms 'satisfiers'. These satisfiers can be conventional (material) or non-conventional (immaterial) and they can also be negative (causing conflict and destruction) or positive (causing peace and development). Max-Neef describes the disconnection between fundamental human needs and current trends in development as being driven by 'pseudo-satisfiers' (that which people are convinced or persuaded will meet their fundamental human needs but in the long-term fail to do so). While all nine of the needs identified are universal according to Max-Neef, the satisfiers required are not, they are specific and contextual according to the setting under question. Thus, appropriate satisfiers in one context may not be appropriate in another.⁹⁶²

Max-Neef's thinking assists in understanding the degree of felt-need frustration experienced by the general Zimbabwean public as they have been continually denied the option of participation in their own national governance systems for decades. Open arenas of socio-political *dialogue* are an essential marker in the measurement of national

⁹⁶¹ Burton, J. (ed.) 1990. *Conflict: Human Needs Theory*. London: MacMillan Press.

⁹⁶² Max-Neef, M., Elizalde, A., Hopenhayn, M. 1989. "Human Scale Development: An Option for the Future". *Development Dialogue – A Journal for International Development Cooperation*, published by Dag Hammarskjöld, Uppsala, Sweden: 1.

participation. A healthy democratic environment will constantly be giving birth to, and be nurtured, challenged, and transformed by '*inter-locking spheres of dialogue*'⁹⁶³ among its citizenry.

Curiously, the ZANU-PF has always allowed elements of political dialogue in Zimbabwe but only in isolation one from another. Disguised as democratic inclination, the ZANU-PF would turn a blind eye to certain dialogical impulses provided they were running on congruent or parallel tracks. The goal of ZANU-PF was to ensure that these dialogues were always divided; separated in order to keep the spark of synergy from erupting. ZANU-PF knew full well the power of resistance contact and the exponential duplication of ideas and applications of insurgency. The transference of social capital in human networks inherently brings with it growth and change; innovative means of expressing and exerting the people's will. To the fortress mentality of the ZANU-PF government these synergies were deeply threatening and have had to be systematically and continually blocked.

Thus, the ZANU-PF surveillance allowed ongoing pockets of political dialogue to ensue but only if they remained disconnected one from the other. The moment these various dialogues gained too much momentum and transformative linkages emerged the ZANU-PF would shut them down. In Zimbabwe's future view, this dialogical tension will need to be allowed its full course and will have to be sustained across multiple sectors both vertically and horizontally. Through a national, cross-sectoral dialogical process, trust will be built, new shared narratives constructed, and new patterns of communication forged in order to move forward in joint action and networking for a better Zimbabwe in the future.

Transitional justice in Zimbabwe will need to encourage a proliferation of '*dialogical platforms*'; structured forums in the public domain where all Zimbabweans can freely participate without fear of intimidation or reprisal from the State security apparatus. These dialogue platforms will provide the necessary locations where Zimbabweans can formulate and produce a diversity of narratives in conjunction with the governance and developmental structures of their local communities and of the nation as

⁹⁶³ This phrase was coined by Philip Visser in describing the inner-workings of a Video Dialogues Project, a media approach to peace-building implemented in the violence-racked townships of Thokoza, Kathlehong and Vosloorus located in Johannesburg, South Africa from 1996-1999.

a whole. Urgent national dialogue is required in the arenas of constitutional reform, structures of human rights, gender equity, labour and land mediation, union/worker relations, educational policies, community policing initiatives, and local development programmes to name but a few.

“So, I think peace will come; if there is a Constitution, the culture of tolerance, of accepting each other. *This culture of wanting to hear the views of other people without necessarily saying ‘this person is opposed to me’, accept logical debate.* But what happens now is what we were doing as boys when we were growing up in the bush. If we talk and debate and...I find that I’m losing the debate, I then tell my opponent, ‘even if you think you know more or much and you think you have good or better ideas, you cannot beat me, physically’. So all of the sudden the conversation turns into violence, physically. And I see that happening on the ground, where people are saying ‘ok fine. You might have good ideas but you can not necessarily beat me physically’.”⁹⁶⁴

Essentially, these dialogical platforms would resemble the social technologies evoked in public participation⁹⁶⁵ and sustained dialogue⁹⁶⁶ frameworks. In general, both of these conceptions move along a participatory spectrum from inform, to consult, to involve, to collaborate, and finally to empower.⁹⁶⁷ Facilitation of these processes relies heavily on the following principles: broad-based representation, high levels of engagement, incorporating many avenues of ‘knowing’, ability to manage commonalities and diversities (including conflict) with creativity, leaving time-frames open-ended, exploring as many as outcomes as possible, and providing a place for deep listening to be transacted. Among the many constructive benefits of these kinds of processes, the following list was developed around a sustained dialogue process in New Zealand:

- An educational approach is not enough
- The value of having a parallel process to formal government procedures,

⁹⁶⁴ Interview: DN1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 29/03/07 – (Ndebele Church Leader whose father was killed by 5th Brigade soldiers in 1984).

⁹⁶⁵ **Public participation** approaches usually involve most of the following facilitated forums / sessions: Community information, community conversation, community healing, community engagement, public judgment, and public reflection. Retrieved from web 15/02/2009. http://www.co-intelligence.org/CIPol_publicparticipation.html

⁹⁶⁶ Saunders, H. 1999. *A Public Peace Process – Sustained dialogue to transform Racial and Ethnic Conflicts*. New York: Palgrave. **Sustained dialogue** approaches include at least five stages: Deciding to engage, mapping and naming, exploring problems and relationships, scenario building or developing options, and acting together. Retrieved from web 29/10/2008. <http://www.scp.org.nz/deliberations.php>

⁹⁶⁷ Arnstein, S. “*Ladder of Public Participation*”. Arnstein speaks of public participation within the context of high to low power ranging from manipulation, to therapy, to informing, to consultation, to placation, to partnership, to delegated power, and to citizen control. Retrieved from web 15/02/0. <http://www.partnerships.org.uk/part/am.htm>

- The action of citizens outside of government,
- The importance of moving beyond time constraints,
- The value of having a systematic process with substance,
- The importance of ongoing connections and communication, and
- Going beyond a legal solution to issues.⁹⁶⁸

Citizen activity of this nature is already being proposed and acted upon in Zimbabwe since the formation of the Government of National Unity in late 2008. One illustration of this is the Centre for Peace Initiatives in Africa (CPIA) which has launched a National Reconciliation, Social Cohesion and Transitional Justice programme that has as its mission to “facilitate national healing, sense of belonging and dealing with past injustices”.⁹⁶⁹ CPIA describes its work as:

“...seeks to reconcile parties, as a process of managing and /or resolving conflict in order to avoid unnecessary violence, injury to people, loss of lives and armed conflict that hinder positive development in Zimbabwe. It paves the way for the much needed dialogical engagement at all levels in the country and to facilitate the transformation of relationships at all levels of our society.”⁹⁷⁰

These forms of civil society engagement that stimulate *citizen-to-citizen action* for corporate justice, healing and reconciliation are not only commendable, they are essential as Zimbabwe struggles to re-invest in the people’s participation in the governance and development of the country. Public participation and sustained dialogue represent two of the process frames through which narrative construction of social reality is realised. If facilitated and managed skilfully, these public participation scaffolding will assist in harmonising the many divergent narratives that currently exist in Zimbabwe.

9.6.4. Re-engaging in collective Healing

Collective healing will begin to flow as the nation of Zimbabwe is able to embrace a joint historical memory (Section 9.5.1.), to redefine and diversify its

⁹⁶⁸ Retrieved from web 29/10/2008. <http://www.scpi.org.nz/deliberations.php>

⁹⁶⁹ Hove, S. 2009. *National Reconciliation, Social Cohesion and Transitional Justice Programme*. A case study prepared by the Centre for Peace Initiatives in Africa (CPIA), Harare, Zimbabwe, 15/04/09: 1. Other important initiatives of this kind are the Habakkuk Trust (Bulawayo) which is training rural and urban communities in Matabeleland in advocacy skills in order to empower local leaders to mobilise the communities to pressurise the government for basic needs provision such as the delivery of food, water, electricity and sanitation (habakkuktrust.blogspot.com). The Christian Legal Society (CLS-Bulawayo) is educating rural populations on their legal rights, holding public participation meetings on current legislation, and finding ways to make the legal system more accessible to the people at a grassroots level (www.advocatesinternational.org/pages/africa/zimbabwe.htm).

⁹⁷⁰ Hove, S, 2009: 1-2.

understanding of inclusion and belonging (Section 9.5.2.) and to give impetus and implementation to a vibrant public participation framework (Section 9.5.3.). Collective healing requires the reconfiguration of socio-political *spaces* for healing; safe spaces, familial and community-building spaces, transformative spaces, and spaces for advocacy. *Safe-spaces* refer to the base-line physical security required for people who have suffered under trauma to speak without fear. The notion of safety is also considering the psychological trust and emotional boundary protection required for victims of violence to feel comfortable to share stories of grief and loss, vent anger and rage and disclose intimate concerns for the future. *Familial and community-building spaces* speak to the need to reconstruct the relational webs of social support that solidify identity, belonging, dignity and purpose to human existence. The very acts of violence and war are psychosocially destructive, disempowering people by cutting them off from intimate relations (by killing or forced migration) and thereby alienating or isolating the individual from the power of the familiar (familial ties) and the meaningful 'in-context' relationships of community that give the individual existential power. *Transformative spaces* tap into the human need for introspection, reflection, and spiritual devotion. For the religious person these spaces are often found in the spiritual disciplines of prayer, fasting, meditation and forms of transcendent worship. These spaces are characterised by time and location considerations that are conducive to being alone, quiet and restful, or which could entail activities that involve didactic interactions with those considered as spiritual mentors and or peer counsellors. Finally, *spaces for advocacy* must be developed. The idea of advocacy is pivotal for the future healing of those who have suffered under violent repression. For those populations who have lived under systematic oppression and who experienced no structural outlet of appeal to their subjugation, the reassurance of advocacy support structures becomes essential. Restorative justice requires that the *future intentions* of the perpetrators (former oppressors) be addressed in a satisfactory manner for the victims or survivors involved to feel safe again.⁹⁷¹ Having the relational structures, constitutive systems, and legal policies or procedures for advocacy in place and accessible for public consumption inevitably translates into higher levels of assurance for the formerly voiceless victim.

⁹⁷¹ Zehr, H. 1990. *Changing Lenses: A New Focus for Crime and Justice*. Scottsdale: Herald Press.

Collective healing is also about *generational thinking*⁹⁷². It is a gift for the sake of future generations. For a nation to heal it requires going backwards and coming to terms with its painful past, while at the same time living out and building for the future, laying a foundation for durable peace. The movement of *memorialisation*⁹⁷³ that is taking shape in many post-conflict sites around the world opens the way for assisting nations to think and act inter-generationally. Memorialisation functions not only to remember *what was* (past), it reminds of *what is* (present) and shows what *will be* (future). In her action research on memorialisation in South Africa, Ereshnee Naidoo presents the power of memorialisation in the psyche of a nation:

“Memory, as perpetuated through processes such as memorialisation seen in national monuments and commemorative celebrations can assist divided societies to re-write the narratives of the past; recognise and assist survivors of human rights violations through symbolic reparations to begin the process of healing; and assist the previously divided society in processes of reconciliation.”⁹⁷⁴

Memorialisation has often been disregarded as a healing agency in the transitional justice movement because it is perceived to be a non-essential for at least three reasons: First, due to its symbolic nature, it is seen as intangible process that is extremely difficult to measure or objectify. Second, in some circles, it does not carry the same ‘weight’ as the political discourse or legal frameworks that surround many transitional justice approaches. Third, it is often perceived as a less significant form (immaterial) of reparations as compared to financial compensation or substantive restitution (such as land). While there is always the danger that certain governments may use memorialisation as a cover-up to their failure to delivery on material reparations, recent research is discovering the significance of memorialisation at multiple levels:

“...memorialisation has a variety of purposes and is able to address some of the intangible aspects of conflict related to issues of culture; dignity; human relationships and collective identities...According to [South African research]

⁹⁷²Sawatsky, J. 2008: 19-20. In his work on *justpeace ethics*, Sawatsky locates the perspective of a generational lens in the relational-focused approach to change.

⁹⁷³ Hamber, B. 2007. Reparations as Symbol: Narratives of Resistance, Reticence, and Possibility in South Africa, in J. Miller & R. Kumar (Eds.) *Reparations: Interdisciplinary Inquiries*. New York: Oxford University Press; Hamber, B. & Wilson, R. 2003. Symbolic closure through Memory, Reparation and Revenge in Post-conflict Societies, in E. Cairns and M. Roe (Eds.) *Role of Memory in Ethnic Conflict*, Macmillan Publishers.

⁹⁷⁴ Naidoo, R. 2006. “The Ties that Bind: Strengthening the links between memorialisation and transitional justice”. *Transitional Justice Project Brief*, Johannesburg: The Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR), August; 1.

respondents, the purposes of their own memorialisation initiatives included truth-telling; seeking justice; building a culture of democracy; commemorating previously marginalised histories and heritage; and recognising victims and survivors of human rights violations.”⁹⁷⁵

Two critical hurdles to memorialisation are the dangers of stakeholder consultations being *politicised*, and/or the *timing and sequencing* of the process either exploding due to the mismanagement of highly sensitive content issues and relationship protocols, or being encumbered with so many delays and overshadowed by current events as to be rendered irrelevant. The concept of ‘living memory’ (how to keep the memorialisation process relevant, interactive and growing) is gaining particular momentum in recent years.

“...it is necessary that initiatives continually evolve to accommodate changes in its social, cultural and political milieu...To ensure that memorials continue to evolve with different generations, whether it means transforming the meaning of divisive memorials, or ensuring that post-conflict memorials accommodate for identity shifts within society, it is necessary that ongoing reflection and evaluation is undertaken.”⁹⁷⁶

Memorialisation is but one channel through which the space for collective healing is reconfigured. Memorialisation has the potential to provide a safe-space, a community-building space, a transformative space and a space for advocacy in the process of the recovery from collective trauma. Memorialisation becomes the instrument through which the many scattered national narratives are harmonised for the purposes of nation-building.

9.6.5. In Search of Reconciliation in Zimbabwe

For better or for worse, the process of genuine ‘unity-solidification’ cannot be arrived at by taking socio-political ‘short-cuts’. Genuine transitional justice initiatives must be ‘stratified’, even as the violence system is complex. Recent experience and research indicates that there are pluralistic and seemingly contradictory ‘voices’ that must be invited to come to the ‘meeting place’ of reconciliation. In the poetic literature of the Judeo-Christian scriptures, the Psalmist writes: “*Truth and Mercy have met together; Peace and Justice have kissed*”⁹⁷⁷. Within this one line of verse resides a picture of

⁹⁷⁵ Ibid, 2.

⁹⁷⁶ Ibid, 3.

⁹⁷⁷ *The Holy Bible*, Spanish Version (in translation), Psalm 85:10.

seemingly disparate concepts that find ways to ‘meet’ and even intimately connect as they form an integrated whole of reconciliation:

- **Truth** - (acknowledgement, transparency, revelation, clarity and storytelling)
- **Mercy** - (acceptance, forgiveness, support, compassion and healing)
- **Justice** - (equalizing power, right relationships, reparations, restitution and reconstruction)
- **Peace** - (well-being, harmony/unity, safety/security, respect/dignity, trust /loyalty, and co-operation)⁹⁷⁸

To explore reconciliation from this perspective requires an ability to handle or manage multiple layers with inherent paradoxes impressed upon the process. This calls for taking a risk to open up a place that may bring *indictment and freedom simultaneously*; an environment where the demarcations of perpetrator/victim, right/wrong, justified/unjustified will not be easily exercised. Holding this tension between accountability and freedom in a balance is precisely the point at which transitional justice approaches often fail. This is in part due to the adversarial and retributive nature of the legal frames in which most transitional justice programmes are designed under. The legal binaries that force choices between either *truth* (blame and prosecution), or *mercy* (impunity or amnesty) and between *justice* (enforced punitive measures), or *peace* (avoidance, accommodation or compromise) prevail. Discovering ways to re-employ and move beyond the ‘either/or’ cosmology of the defining political-legal system of the day is pivotal in order to find new expressions of relational-centred practices that satisfy the needs for human justice and reconciliation for all stakeholders involved.

“I think one of the third ways we’re looking at, in Rwanda and others, and we’ve been encouraging this, but Rwanda is the only one that’s really done something; technically they call it Gacaca...*this is a way we could link a ‘national’ Truth Commission process through a local process that would find ways to deal with the compensation and the relationship mending and bridge-building. And somehow bring out a little more sense of healing, of closure.* So we’ve all been trying to encourage the TRC’s in Sierra Leone and Rwanda that we work with to try and look at indigenous practices of justice and bring a restorative component that will

⁹⁷⁸ Lederach, J.P. 1997. *Building Peace – Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*. Washington DC: USIP Press, 30.

be much more meaningful at a local level as a process for this whole thing as opposed to leaving that in the hands of the national government.”⁹⁷⁹

The resurgence of traditional indigenous practices of this kind appears to be one of the most promising applications of alternative justice and reconciliation processes currently available. A Zimbabwean transitional justice model can learn from the competencies and challenges faced by other African nations who have embarked on similar projects. In the remaining part of this section, attention will be given to the learning garnered from three other African transitional justice endeavours and a proposed model for a Zimbabwean transitional justice approach will be outlined.

9.6.5.1. South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)

In the case of the South African TRC, while it moved away from blanket amnesty (the primary experience of South America) and embraced impunity only on the condition of full disclosure of the truth, it fell short on a number of other critical measures. First, it was perceived to be *perpetrator-centred* as opposed to victim-centred in part because of the amount of time and attention given to the legal aspects (rights and procedures) of the amnesty applicants. For example, victim-offender interactions were seriously hampered by the legal constraint that confined perpetrators to only discuss the past within the parameters of the amnesty hearings themselves. The perpetrator was liable for any confessions, admissions of guilt, or apologies expressed outside the amnesty hearings in a court of law. Hence, in this case, the law actually stood as a barrier to accomplishing the essential outcomes of relationship-building and reconciliation. Second, the South African TRC functioned from a *top-down approach* which was successful in opening up a robust debate on reconciliation at a national level, but it failed to translate that reconciliation experience in practical application at the local community level context. In South Africa there was no formal interface between the TRC and other traditional, indigenous practices of justice, healing and reconciliation. Third, the South African TRC ended up making a once-off payment of money to its victims thereby, failing to engage perpetrators

⁹⁷⁹ Interview: DC1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe - 13/09/07 (White Zimbabwean Human Rights Lawyer and politician).

and communities in creative, meaningful efforts of *compensation and reparations* that would restore dignity, build community and bring closure to a violent, repressive past.⁹⁸⁰

From the above discussion there are at least three key learning that can be taken from the South African TRC experiences. Firstly, the legal frameworks in which TRCs are often wrapped in have an inherent perpetrator focus and what appears to be an offender bias in the eyes of the victims and survivors. Secondly, it cannot be assumed that a national TRC process can or will be automatically or easily translated from the state level to the local community context. To implement the measures of a ‘top-down to bottom-up’ approach takes intentional, concerted and strategic planning, time and energy. Thirdly, a meaningful restorative justice effort must go beyond narratives of confession, testimony and apology and must enact tangible (material or structural) compensation/reparation reciprocities for it to be seen and felt as complete by the masses on-the-ground.

9.6.5.2. Gacaca process in Rwanda

Building on the South African TRC experience, Rwanda took their transitional process a step further and engaged in a local, community-based approach to justice called *Gacaca*⁹⁸¹ which was mandated to run parallel (compliment and supplement) to the legal process of an International Tribunal that had already been launched by the International Criminal Courts in Arusha, Tanzania. The benefits of this process are myriad and the world is watching with bated breath to see the long-term, potential success of this effort at building a sustainable climate of reconciliation and healing in Rwanda.

Interestingly, some of the most stinging critique of the Rwandan experience of transitional justice has *not* been in relation to the internal-structure or effectiveness of the Gacaca approach, but instead the political interference of governmental ideology and

⁹⁸⁰ Van der Merwe, H. 1999. *The Truth and Reconciliation Commission and Community Reconciliation: An Analysis of Competing Strategies and Conceptualizations*. Doctoral Dissertation, George Mason University: Fairfax, Virginia, (summer semester).

⁹⁸¹ Wolters, S. 2005. “The Gacaca Process”, *African Security Review* 14 (3). Retrieved from the web on 19/09/09. <http://www.iss.co.zapubs/ASR/14No3/AWolters.htm>. The Gacaca process involves the community electing nine community leaders / elders who function as the third-party judges in each case. These nine community arbitrators are tasked with gathering as much information as possible about the genocide activity in their local village. They then bring together the survivors, accused offenders, family support networks and the community at large. Truth-telling is core to the process with the use of witnesses to corroborate the findings. Opportunity for offender admission of guilt, confession and apology as well as survivor-offender mediation and reconciliation are emphasised throughout the process. Forgiveness, reduced prison sentence, compensation or punitive discipline is then decided by the community judges.

policy that swirls around the national definition of ‘genocide’. Vigilant against any language or action that smacks of ‘genocidal ideology’, the government in Rwanda has outlawed the use of the ethnic designations of ‘Hutu’ and ‘Tutsi’, and keeps a tight surveillance on any organisations that appear to only work with or favour one ethnic group in neglect of the other. While this is quite understandable in lieu of the horrific nature of ethnic genocide that has transpired in that nation’s history, it has had the unintended consequence of ‘silencing’ a rigorous and honest debate about ethnicity and genocide within the country.⁹⁸²

On top of this, in an over-eagerness to exonerate itself from the violence of 1994⁹⁸³, and suppress all hints of genocide ideology in the country, the ruling party has embarked on a rigorous campaign to carefully distinguish between the language of genocide (organised violence intent on eliminating an entire ethnic group) and all other forms of violence (mass killings or massacres). On the surface this linguistic differentiation seems straight forward, however for the narrative processes of healing being discussed in this thesis it has dangerous implications. First, it has allowed the ruling Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF) to excuse itself from implication in violence, claiming that whatever massacres or mass killings that may have transpired under its watch were strictly a consequence of war and in defence against the ‘genocide’. Second, this clear definition of language infers that only Hutu people could have had genocide intentions. Third, as the Gacaca process was set up to deal with the aftermath of ‘genocide’ specifically and not the past violence in Rwanda generally, by implication the Gacaca process appears to carry a bias in favour of Tutsi and against Hutu.⁹⁸⁴

The key learning here is that any process of truth and reconciliation (whether in amnesty or prosecution) must hold an impartial standard to all persons or organisations involved in perpetrating violence regardless of which side one may fall on, or whether or

⁹⁸² Tiemessen, A. 2004. “After Arusha: Gacaca Justice in Post-Genocide Rwanda”. *African Studies Quarterly* 8 (1). Retrieved from the web 19/09/09. <http://web.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v8/v8i1a4.htm>

⁹⁸³ The ruling Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF) represents the armed struggle movement launched in 1990 by exiled Tutsis in Uganda (with support from moderate Hutu) who fought against the Hutu-dominated government of that time. In 1994, the RPF penetrated Rwanda through Uganda and cut a path straight to the capital Kigali as the genocide raged. Along the way the RPF was also accused of numerous massacres and mass killings.

⁹⁸⁴ Mamdani, M. 2001. *When Victims become Killers – Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda*. Oxford: James Curry, 264-282 (Conclusion: Political Reform after Genocide).

not one claims a moral high ground in the cause of violent struggle. Without this demarcation against violence across the board, there will remain a mind-set of victors (winners) and vanquished (losers) which will only lend itself to continued revenge cycles in the future. Plus, the transitional justice movement runs the risk of sending the signal that certain violence is justified and permissible if it fails to hold all perpetrators of violence in equitable standing.⁹⁸⁵

9.6.5.3. Fambul Tok in Sierra Leone

After a brutal terrorising twelve year civil war, Sierra Leone instituted a Truth and Reconciliation Commission in a bid to promote healing and restoration. As part of the negotiated peace settlement in Sierra Leone, the rebel movement (Revolutionary United Front - RUF) was granted blanket amnesty. In response to this blanket amnesty, the International Criminal Courts seized the moment to apply prosecution measures against the highest ranking leaders responsible for crimes against humanity perpetrated during the civil war. At a national level the TRC embarked on a truth-telling exercise seasoned with a collective historical re-write and the spice of public ‘confession-apology-forgiveness’ transactions. Unfortunately, under the weight of a voluminous final report, the Sierra Leone TRC also struggled to find innovative ways to inculcate the spirit of reconciliation at a community grassroots level.

However, one of the most promising civil society responses to this dearth of community instituted healing processes is the Fambul Tok (in the local Krio language this is literally translated, ‘Family Talk’). Fambul Tok was launched in early 2008 by a Sierra Leonean human rights organisation, Forum of Conscience⁹⁸⁶ with support from Catalyst of Peace⁹⁸⁷, a foundation based in the United States. Fambul Tok is touted as a community-driven effort that boasts the following vision: “*Fostering sustainable peace in Sierra Leone through reviving our communities’ traditions and values of confession, forgiveness and reconciliation.*”⁹⁸⁸ The approach itself is based on traditional practices of resolving conflicts within the confines and safety of the family network. Organised and

⁹⁸⁵ Lemarchand, R. 1994. *Burundi – Ethnic Conflict and Genocide*. Cambridge: Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Cambridge University Press, 160-177 (Chapter 9: Hegemony, consociationalism, democracy, or none of the above?).

⁹⁸⁶ For more information see www.forumforconscience.org

⁹⁸⁷ For more information see www.catalystforpeace.org

⁹⁸⁸ Fambul Tok: Community Healing in Sierra Leone: Project Summary. Retrieved from the web 07/09/09. <http://www.fambultok.org/summary.html>

implemented within the local village context, the encounters integrate innovative measures of dialogue and healing such as what is termed ‘truth-telling bonfires’ and various traditional cultural cleansing ceremonies. These interactions are facilitated by local leaders / elders who provide the wisdom and moral structure for the interface. Following these events, the momentum for healing and reconciliation is capitalised on through practical activities of radio-listening clubs, football games and communal farming projects. Initially, 161 ceremonies of this nature were planned at a chiefdom level around the country, however the significance of this approach has spawned a great demand for this process at all levels of the society and as such there are plans to see thousands of these kinds of ceremonies conducted across the nation. With the Sierra Leonean TRC completed and the closure of the International Criminal Courts coming to an end, it is predicted that the process of Fambul Tok will play a leading role in securing healing, reconciliation and peace in Sierra Leone for the future. The significance of this creative approach is described as follows:

“Fambul Tok...is a face-to-face community owned program that brings together perpetrators and victims of the violence in Sierra Leone’s eleven-year civil war through ceremonies rooted in the local traditions of the villages that were affected. It provides Sierra Leonean citizens with an opportunity to come to terms with what happened during the war, to dialogue, to experience healing, and to chart a new path forward – together.”⁹⁸⁹

The key learning from here is that Fambul Tok shows the potential of community-initiated programmes to deliver healing and reconciliation across a nation. Despite government inabilities to translate the reconciliation experience from the top echelons to the ground, Fambul Tok illustrates the energy spark and creative genius of civil society and community-based innovation when allowed to dream and act out a better future for themselves.

In summary, out of the various African transitional justice experiences discussed above, one could deduce that there are a number of critical elements to the process of transitional justice that should not be overlooked. First, transitional justice is best served when facilitated from within its own indigenous tradition by an *‘insider-impartial’*

⁹⁸⁹ Ibid.

(trusted ‘in-context’ leaders)⁹⁹⁰. Second, transitional justice is understood to be a breach of community harmony, well-being and order and therefore to repair this corporate fissure the victims, offenders, extended families and community networks must all be involved; it is a communal problem. Third, culturally appropriate platforms for truth-telling, confession, apology, forgiveness and reconciliation should be explored throughout the process. Fourth, material forms of reparations, restitution and compensation are expected as signs of peaceful goodwill and as indications of human responsibility and obligation to make right the wrong. Fifth, symbolic gestures of ritual healing, cleansing and resolution are an important means of reintegration of offenders, release of the victim-survivors and psycho-social closure for all who have been affected by the conflict.

9.6.5.4. A Values-based Transitional Justice Model for Zimbabwe

In reviewing the content of the research transcripts from this thesis, four distinct threads of recommendation emerged in regard to what the respondents considered to be the constitutive components that should be included in any transitional justice process in Zimbabwe. These were as follows: *victim-centred*, *responsibility-oriented*, *community-driven*, and *compensation-based*. These four characteristics could be understood to be the ‘guiding principles’ for developing the structures and activities of transitional justice in Zimbabwe. Each of these recommended ‘guiding principles’ appear to be connected to particular needs that were deeply neglected by the ZANU-PF ruling party since it came to power in the independence elections of 1980.

The call for a *victim-centred* approach to Zimbabwe’s transitional justice is a response to decades of victim neglect, silencing, and subjugation by the ZANU-PF government. The layers of victims and survivors of political violence in Zimbabwe is expansive (see Section 9.3.). The victims of violence in Zimbabwe have not only been denied their voice and participation in political governance, they have been humiliated by being blamed for the traumatic violence that they have had to endure, all the while, the principle perpetrators (ZANU-PF) continually praising themselves. Thus, the transitional justice process must not only be inviting to the victims and survivors of past political

⁹⁹⁰ Taken from notes on ‘Fundamentals for Peace-building’, a course taught by John Paul Lederach at the Summer Peacebuilding Institute (SPI), May-June Session 2000.

violence, it must be built around the core of victim's experiences and needs. The following research transcripts represent sample responses on this issue:

"Our policy is that there should be a Truth Commission that is *victim-orientated*. In other words provide an opportunity to victims, firstly to tell their story, just to get it out...*and secondly to ask them what they desire to achieve justice*. Because I just think there's a real danger that politicians, lawyers, anyone else who's inherently arrogant, you know, will decide what the victims want..."⁹⁹¹

"We are also doing what we are referring to as "Liturgical Spiritual Activities" e.g. having funeral services within communities where we have identified the shallow graves, we secure those shallow graves, and we have a formal funeral service, which has never been done. With names and epithets written of the people, when they were born and when they actually died. It means that officially the relatives can actually go to the grave and mourn. It means they are beginning to deal, to bereave officially. So these are the ways and means in which we do that. *We are doing so specifically that we need to demystify the whole aspect of the suffering and the trauma that was caused in Matabeleland. By demystifying it, we are keeping the whole Matabeleland massacre, as we call it, on the map that it's not going to be hidden.*"⁹⁹²

Rallying for a *responsibility-oriented* transitional justice approach incorporates the crucial need for the perpetrating (individual or organisational entity) to publicly acknowledge wrong-doing and submit to an *accountability* structure. This is a definite response to the culture of impunity that has been entrenched by the ZANU-PF since the beginning of its rule. The Matabeleland masses on the ground feel they have not heard an *apology* yet. Instead, there has been a continuous stream of rationalisations and justifications coming from the central government that eventually always seem to lead to granting the offending political leaders unconditional amnesty. The following research transcripts present a clear argument in this regard:

"I think there's no doubt that a real process of accountability 'has' to take place. There are a lot of things that the current government has done with '*impunity*' and there's a lot that was done with '*impunity*' in the name of the present government. *For people to be able to know and understand that they have to respect Human Rights, you have to demonstrate that by holding them accountable.*"⁹⁹³

⁹⁹¹ Interview: DC1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe - 13/09/07 (White Zimbabwean Human Rights Lawyer and politician).

⁹⁹² Interview: RM2, Johannesburg, South Africa - 26/02/08 – (Shona NGO peace activist advocating for trauma healing and reconciliation among rural Matabeleland communities and survivors of Gukurahundi violence).

⁹⁹³ Interview: SD1, Johannesburg, South Africa - 18/08/06 – (Shona Human Rights Lawyer).

“...culturally, if I offend someone, if I really want that person to know ‘I’m sorry, I want to reconcile that’, culturally we send a mediator on my behalf to speak my words. I put words into that person’s mouth and they speak those words. I feel like the people in Mat-south are saying ‘we are not crying for the president himself to come and address us, but if he sends word’...*So I feel like the people of Matabeleland they are waiting for an apology...In our culture a word of apology is very powerful...So that’s what they are waiting for and I’m not sure for how long they’ll have to wait until something is done.*”⁹⁹⁴

“...government through this President, Robert Mugabe, needs to accept that they have failed. Until we get [to] that point, things will not change. *If they accept that they’ve failed then they can swallow their internal pride and allow dialogue to take place...so that we can start getting a move towards the best condition...* But until government accepts they have failed, in all ways possible then we can not start going forward.”⁹⁹⁵

The push for a *community-driven* transitional justice process hinges on the decentralisation of national government structures and a relocation of the power centre among the civil society and communities on the ground. This is a tangible response from the grassroots to highly centralised, and autocratic one-party state that has attempted to control the nation’s justice system for years now. This is not a cry for political anarchy meant to undermine the authority of national government; it is an invitation for politicians to share power with the people they purport to lead. It is a challenge to the authorities to allow the transitional justice process to proceed organically, within the boundaries of the law, but evolving as a ground-swell from the bottom-up as opposed to the hierarchical, top-down approaches so prevalent in the past. The following research transcript lends a strong voice to this concern:

“A Truth Commission is an environment that is conducive for people to tell their stories of what happened, under a legal framework, statutory of parliament, with the idea and goal to have restorative justice within these areas and these people. *So we see this as a long process and we see this as something that must come from villages, to communities, to districts, to provinces, and to regions, and to a national level. It is a problem of Zimbabwe, it must not be left as a Matabeleland problem; it is a Zimbabwean problem...* we need to avoid the South African position and the Zimbabwean position where the Unity Accord was between two

⁹⁹⁴ Interview: NM1, Mtshabezi, Zimbabwe – 28/06/06 – (Female Ndebele Peace Activist working with rural Matabeleland women).

⁹⁹⁵ Interview: PK1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 30/03/07 – (A prominent member of Ndebele Royal Family).

political parties, and the victims by and large were left hanging. *We would like it to be something that is driven by the ordinary people.*"⁹⁹⁶

Finally, the reoccurring strand advocating for a *compensation-based* transitional justice programme is a clear response to the corrupted concentration of the nation's wealth in the hands of a few and the long-standing development neglect that the Matabeleland region has felt every since independence. While personal restitution given to individual families would be an appreciated step forward in acknowledging the victim's pain and suffering, the more frequent plea from this research sample was for structural development to flow again in Matabeleland; something that has been missing since the early 1980s. In the minds of the following research respondents, reparations and material development were definitely coupled and both were regarded as forms of nation-building for the future.

"The new government that comes here...must address the issues of the Fifth Brigade activities first, [they]'re welcome. We don't want a government who I'm going to tell, 'No, you solve this problem first', but now you see it later. When you talk some times and [they] also behaves like the past government. As soon as it comes to the 'power' it must address this issue first. *Then secondly, you must start developing the country. But failure to address this issue here in Matabeleland, Midlands... 'You can pardon them, but you never forget'. If they are serious about this, they should have apologized.* Even the government himself is asking for birth certificates of the people that have been killed, instead of trying to help the people. How can you feel it in your stomach? They want the witnesses instead, but what if they were killed by the same person?"⁹⁹⁷

"But then 'Truth Commission' as a way of revealing more of what actually happened and accepting responsibility with those that are involved and with what they were involved in, [I] can accept that 'it's me that actually did that', right. *And then the next step; they accept that some form of reparation towards that, which will be less than replacing our people. That will create a conducive, nationhood atmosphere,* right, for that reason, yes. But the Truth Commission purely for somebody who has lost a relative and that relative will not be replaced, and whether there's a Truth Commission or not, that relative remains dead; that Truth Commission is meaningless."⁹⁹⁸

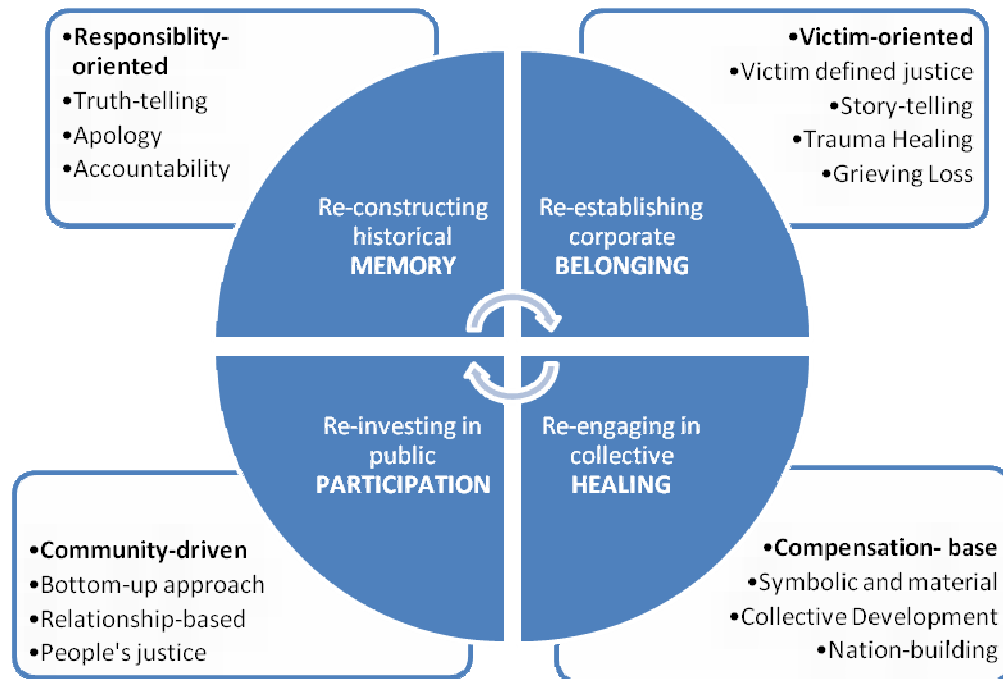
⁹⁹⁶ Interview: RM2, Johannesburg, South Africa - 26/02/08 – (Shona NGO peace activist advocating for trauma healing and reconciliation among rural Matabeleland communities and survivors of Gukurahundi violence).

⁹⁹⁷ Interview: AN2, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 12/09/07 – (Ndebele Ex-ZIPRA Soldier).

⁹⁹⁸ Interview: PK1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 30/03/07 – (A prominent member of Ndebele Royal Family).

To propose a detailed, technical practice model to implement as a transitional justice programme in Zimbabwe would to step outside of the time and content mandate of this thesis. However, in the interest of providing some form of narrative accompaniment to the Zimbabwean exercise in justice, healing and reconciliation, this research would like to propose a set of *guiding values and principles* that could serve as a map for Zimbabwe's transition. This proposed 'values-based model' (**Diagram 10**) below has at its core the four guiding values of the need to reconstruct a *unifying memory* (Section 9.5.1.), re-establish a sense of *belonging and responsibility* (Section 9.5.2.), re-invest in a vibrant *public participation* process (Section 9.5.3.), and re-engage in a *collective healing* journey (Section 9.5.4.). These guiding values are meant to inform the big picture vision, mission and strategic direction of a transitional justice effort. Then, with the lessons from other African transitional justice exercises serving as a back-drop, each of these 'guiding values' are paired with the four 'guiding principles' of *victim-centred, responsibility-oriented, community-driven, and compensation-based* that were surfaced in the research transcripts of this study and which are meant to give structure to the project activities and action plan of a national transitional justice endeavour. These interacting values and principles could also be utilised as the basis for a monitoring and evaluation framework of a national justice and reconciliation process in the future.

Diagram 10: Proposed Values-based Model for Transitional Justice in Zimbabwe



Exemplar forms of this kind of integrated justice, healing and reconciliation approach are currently being practiced at local and regional levels in Zimbabwe. One such hopeful initiative is described by two respondents from Matabeleland (the first from a facilitator's perspective and the second from that of a participating community leader):

“But we are also taking pastors and leaders from Mashonaland into the deep areas of Matabeleland to meet with key leaders and to hear from community leaders what happened and for them to share what happened. And we have had a number of these. One such one we did about five months ago, where out of about three hundred, over three hundred people, there was not even one person who was not crying in that meeting, including these Shonas. And one elderly Shona pastor said, ‘*I wish I could find a hole where I can hide, I can’t take it anymore. Please don’t continue to talk. I’m so ashamed and I can’t even stand in front of you. I’m ashamed of being a Shona.*’ And for an Ndebele, one Ndebele elderly man stood up and he said ‘*Now I can die because I know and I have seen with my own eyes and heard with my own ears that there are real people in Mashonaland*’.”⁹⁹⁹

⁹⁹⁹ Interview: RM2, Johannesburg, South Africa - 26/02/08 – (Shona NGO peace activist advocating for trauma healing and reconciliation among rural Matabeleland communities and survivors of Gukurahundi violence).

“I have been involved in this programme of peace-building for the almost five years up to now. And we have been really trying to negotiate that to our own people. We even went to a point of inviting Shona pastors to come and see, even listen to these stories being told by the victims from that end. And [in the] last two months we had a service at Zbonkululu whereby we received around seventeen pastors from Mashonaland. They came to us; they gave people some chances to say out what really transpired. At the end we asked those guys from Mashonaland, maybe to apologise on behalf their counterparts, the Shona-speaking people...what they really did at Matabeleland. At least because of that service that took place, really people have started just forgetting some of these things.”¹⁰⁰⁰

However, the impact of these interventions is somewhat contained and their locations somewhat scattered. It would be beneficial to advocate for national efforts to systematically replicate and multiply these kinds of approaches in order to reach a wider constituency in the nation, and resourcing through the avenues of public government and private donor partnerships would provide the necessary encouragement to carry this vital work forward.

9.7. Releasing Emancipatory¹⁰⁰¹ Narratives

*“Freedom is useless if we don’t exercise it as characters making choices ... We are free to change the stories by which we live. Because we are genuine characters, and not mere puppets, we can choose our defining stories. We can do so because we actively participate in the creation of our stories. We are co-authors as well as characters. Few things are as encouraging as the realization that things can be different and that we have a role in making them so.”*¹⁰⁰²

This analysis has explored the mixture of a lethal narrative cocktail that has been consumed by the ZANU-PF government in Zimbabwe. This highly potent drink has combined a solidified grand-narrative (particular political ideology) with a one-party State power structure draped in the language of sovereignty and leader veneration, under which all other disparate and contrary murmurings that have raised their voices in resistance have been systematically subsumed. The vibrant colours of the dialogue

¹⁰⁰⁰ Interview: RZ1, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe – 11/09/07 – (Ndebele Church leader in Rural Matabeleland and secondary survivor of Gukurahundi violence)

¹⁰⁰¹ Ericson, M. 2001: 35 & 458. Ericson makes use of the phraseology of ‘towards a culture of emancipatory conversations’ which she has borrowed from Arnason, V. 1999. “Towards a Better Life – The Possibility of Universal Discourse Ethics”, paper presented at the UNESCO Conference on *Universal Ethics: From the Nordic Perspectives*, Lund University, 3-5 June.

¹⁰⁰² Eldredge, J. 2001. *Wild at Heart – Discovering the Secret of a Man’s Soul*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 219 (Quote by Daniel Taylor).

around identity, nationalism, loyalty, legitimacy and unity in all their variant hues have been uniformly reduced to a dull grey in this overwhelming script.

The communities of Matabeleland have a narrative just waiting to emerge. It is like an aging wine that has been silently expanding and is now ready to burst out of its confining wineskins. Up until now, this narrative discourse has only been granted sporadic, splintered ‘sound bites’ of time in which to present itself in the public domain. *The people of Matabeleland need to speak and tell their story.* Voices like that of 80-year old Moffat Tshabangu need to be heard:

“The events of those years [1980-87] will forever remain etched in our minds. It is a story I will tell my grandchildren and great grandchildren so that they can fully understand the history of this country. All the things they read about in the country’s history books are pure, refined nonsense meant to placate the egos of ZanuPF Chefs.”¹⁰⁰³

Or, the haunting voice of another Matabeleland villager, Kennias Ngwenya:

“As for those who participated in the murders, may God make the memories of our dead linger forever in their minds.”¹⁰⁰⁴

When the all-consuming monolithic narrative of the ZANU-PF ruling party has taken its bitter and final course, a new spring of discourse will flow. A dialogue which refuses to be threatened by divergent voices and dissenting views will stand tall to fill the public discourse of Zimbabwe’s socio-political domain. A rich and textured narrative of this calibre will bring justice to the land, healing to the memories of those in Matabeleland and reconciliation to all Zimbabweans who have suffered violence in body, heart and mind for far too long.

¹⁰⁰³ ‘Matabeleland rural memories of the Fifth Brigade killings in the 1980’s’ (2003) *The Daily News* (Harare), 20 February.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Ibid.

Appendix I - Open Interview Guiding Questions and Prompts

Stage I: Introduction to Open Interview process

- Welcome and ‘setting the tone’ – ensure that interviewee is comfortable
- Express appreciation for participant’s availability & giving of their time
- Reiteration of the voluntary nature of the interview
- Motivate the request for tape recording process & solicit participant agreement
- Give a brief overview of the research project aim and specific objectives
- Describe and clarify the Open Interview process
- Discuss follow-up processes: availability of transcripts, participant feedback to analysis findings and access to final thesis document.

Stage II: Uninterrupted Story-telling process

Instructions: The aim of this section of the interview is to gather as much uninterrupted narrative as possible in a natural, relaxed conversational style. Your role as the interviewee is to feel free to tell your story as you would like to, with as much detail as you can recall. The role of the interviewer will be to actively listen and will only intervene for the purposes of clarification or the need for more information.

- 1.) Please tell me a personal story of your experience of violence (answering the questions of who, what, where, when and why?) that occurred in Matabeleland between the years of 1980 and 1987.
 - (1a.) What happened?
 - (1b.) Who was involved?
 - (1c.) Where did the violence occur?
 - (1d.) When did the violence occur?
 - (1e.) Why do you think this violence occurred?

Stage III: Detail Expansion, Elaboration and Clarification¹⁰⁰⁵ process

- 1.) Did the government of the day, make any comment on the particular experience of violence that you are telling me about now?
- 2.) If yes, how did they describe or explain this violence?
- 3.) Was the description or explanation given by the government at that time acceptable and understandable to you? If yes, why? If no, why not?
- 4.) What do you think are the ‘root-causes’ of the violence you experienced in the story you just related to me?
- 5.) Was there opportunity to publicly tell your story about the violence you had experienced in Matabeleland at that time?

¹⁰⁰⁵ Interview probes. 2006/03/20. <http://www.computing.dcu.ie/~hruskin/RM2.htm>

(5a.) If yes, could you describe the forums in which this story-telling took place? Where were the locations? Were these gatherings informal or formal? If informal, who was present and what was discussed? If formal, who planned them, who attended, and who facilitated the group proceedings? Who set the agenda / programme for these gatherings?

(5b.) If no, why were the opportunities for story-telling around the issues of Matabeleland violence not possible? Did you tell your story in private? If so, who was present and what was discussed?

6.) Were there particular periods of time during the specific years under study (1980-1987) that you remember the violence increasing or decreasing? In your opinion, what would be the reasons / explanations for these fluctuations?

(6a.) What could have been the causes of the violence increasing or decreasing at that time?

7.) In the current situation (socio-political reality) in Zimbabwe do you feel free to tell your personal story about your experience of violence in Matabeleland that we have been discussing in this interview?

(7a.) If yes, could you describe the forums in which this storytelling takes place? Where are the locations? Are these gatherings informal or formal? If informal, who is present and what is discussed? If formal, who plans them, who attends, and who facilitates the group proceedings? Who sets the agenda / programme for these dialogues?

(7b.) If no, why are the opportunities for story-telling around the issues of Matabeleland violence not possible? Do you freely tell your story in private settings? If so, who is present and what is discussed?

8.) Do you believe that there is a connection between the violence you personally experienced in Matabeleland – 1980-1987 and the current situation being experienced in Zimbabwe today? If no, why not? If yes, please explain.

(8a.) If yes, could you describe what these connections are?

(8b.) Describe how there could be a relationship between what has been spoken about and or happened in the past to what is being spoken about and/or happening in the present?

9.) Do you think that people in Zimbabwe, (both those who were victimised and those who perpetrated violence) need to speak-out about the issues surrounding the Matabeleland violence from 1980-1987? If no, why not?

(9a.) If yes, why? How would talking out the issues of past violence in Matabeleland benefit you?

(9b.) If the people (civil society) and the current ruling party had the freedom to publicly dialogue about the issues of violence surrounding Matabeleland (1980-1987), would this assist in the process of building peace in Zimbabwe? Yes, No or Maybe? Please explain how and why?

Appendix II - List of Interviews Conducted

Name:	Sector Representation	Date of Interview:
1.) BK – (Male)	ZAPU Politician / Professor (Ndebele)	26 / 06 / 2006
2.) EN - (Male)	Former ZANU-PF Politician (Ndebele)	26 / 06 / 2006 NOT RECORDED
3.) NM – 1 - (Female)	Woman Peace-builder / Teacher (Ndebele)	28 / 06 / 2006
4.) AN – (Male)	Tsholotsho Victim Representative (Ndebele)	28 / 06 / 2006 NOT RECORDED
5.) AM - (Male)	Expelled Journalist (White American)	10 / 08 / 2006
6.) DL - (Male)	Self-Exiled Journalist (Ndebele)	11 / 08 / 2006
7.) GS - (Male)	HR Lawyer / Torture Survivor (Shona)	17 / 08 / 2006
8.) SD - (Male)	HR Lawyer, (Shona)	09 / 2006
9.) RM - (Male)	MDC – Security / Torture Survivor (Ndebele)	10 / 2006
10.) JD - (Female)	Woman Human Rights Activist (Ndebele)	10 / 2006
11.) NM - 2 (Male)	Zim Coalition – NGO Advocacy (Shona)	11 / 2006 NOT RECORDED
12.) SM - (Male)	Researcher / Junior Lecturer (Ndebele)	07 / 03 / 2007
13.) DN-1 - (Male)	Church Leader – BICC (Ndebele)	29 / 03 / 2007
14.) CM - (Male)	Bulawayo Agenda – NGO (Ndebele)	29 / 03 / 2007
15.) GM - (Male)	Bulawayo Agenda – NGO (Ndebele)	29 / 03 / 2007
16.) JN - (Male)	CCJP – Activist & Teacher (Ndebele)	29 / 03 / 2007
17.) PK - (Male)	Ndebele Royal Family – Prince	30 / 03 / 2007
18.) DN-2 - (Male)	Retired Journalist – Chronicle (Ndebele)	30 / 03 / 2007
19.) PN - (Male)	Historian / Bulawayo City Council (Ndebele)	30 / 03 / 2007
20.) BN – (Male)	Farmer / Businessman (Ndebele)	31 / 03 / 2007 NOT RECORDED
21.) CM - (Male)	Youth Activist- ZAPU /Teacher / OVC worker (Ndebele)	09 / 05 / 2007
22.) MS-1 - (Male)	Tsholotsho Victim Representative (Ndebele)	11 / 09 / 2007
23.) MS-2 - (Male)	Tsholotsho Victim Representative (Ndebele)	11 / 09 / 2007

24.) RZ - (Male)	Tsholotsho Church Leader – BICC (Ndebele)	11 / 09/ 2007
25.) AN-1 - (Male)	Church Leader / BICC Peace Comm. (Ndebele)	12 / 09 / 2007
26.) AN-2 - (Male)	Ex-ZIPRA Soldier (Ndebele)	12 / 09 / 2007
27.) DC - (Male)	HR Lawyer / MDC Politician (White Zimbabwean)	13 / 09 / 2007
28.) FN - (Male)	Former Staff of Ministry of Finance (Ndebele)	26 / 10 / 2007
29.) DN-3 - (Male)	NGO Advocacy Activist, Director of Grace to Heal (Ndebele)	30 / 10 / 2007
30.) TM - (Male)	Relative of Current ZANU-PF Deputy President Masika (Shona)	01 / 11 / 2007
31.) JA - (Female)	Academic & Author Africa Studies Centre - Oxford University (White American)	30 / 11 / 2007 NOT RECORDED
32.) SN - (Male)	Academic & Professor (Ndebele) Monash & Open University	20 / 12 / 2007
33.) JM - (Male)	Academic and Professor (Shona) University of Zimbabwe, Harare	26 / 02 / 2008
34.) RM - (Male)	NGO Advocacy Activist, one of the founding leaders of Christian Alliance – (Shona)	26 / /02 / 2008
35.) TR - (Male)	Academic & Author Africa Studies Centre - Oxford University (White Zimbabwean)	10 / 2008

Appendix III - Research Programme and Schedule

Year:	Activities:	Timeframe:
2004 – 06	Completed Literature Review	
2006	Completed writing and defence of Thesis Proposal	May
	First Field visit to Bulawayo, Zimbabwe 9 days - Conducted four (4) interviews - Two training events (Mtshabezi) - Consulted Partners	22-30 June
2006	Conducted eight (8) interviews in South Africa: Seven (7) in Johannesburg One (1) in Durban	August to November
2007	Second Field visit to Bulawayo, Zimbabwe 4 days – Conducted eight (8) interviews - Document Analysis in Chronicle Archives	28-31 March
2007	Conducted one (1) Interview in Zambia	May
2007	Third Field visit to Bulawayo, Zimbabwe 7 days – Conducted six (6) interviews	07-13 September
2007	Conducted three (3) interviews in Johannesburg SA	October – November
2007	Conducted one (1) interview in Oxford, England Document Analysis in British Library & Archives	November
2007	Conducted one (1) interview in Johannesburg, SA	December
2008	Conducted two (2) interviews in Johannesburg , SA Hosted a Zimbabwe Advocacy Consultation	February
2008	Interview Transcriptions	July – September
2008	Fourth Field visit to Bulawayo, Zimbabwe Visit and consultation with partners	21-25 September
2008	Conducted one (1) interview in Oxford, UK	October
2008-09	Thesis Writing	August 08 – June 09
2009	Thesis Reader Evaluations & Written Adjustments	July – November
2009	Final Thesis Defence	November / December

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RESEARCH OFFICE (GOVAN MBEKI CENTRE)
WESTVILLE CAMPUS
TELEPHONE NO.: 031 – 2603587
EMAIL: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za

5 FEBRUARY 2008

MR. CS STAUFFER (206526881)
ECONOMICS & MANAGEMENT SCIENCES

Dear Mr. Stauffer

ETHICAL CLEARANCE APPROVAL NUMBER: HSS/08/4/07D

I wish to confirm that ethical clearance has been granted for the following project:

“Acting out the myths: The power of narrative discourse in shaping the Zimbabwe conflict of Matabeleland - 1980 - 1987”

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years

Yours faithfully


.....
MS. PHUMELELE XIMBA

cc. Supervisor (Prof. G Harris)
cc. Ms. A Ndawo

